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The Gita and Youth Today

"Thy business should be with action, never with the fruits; let not thy motive be the fruit of action, nor be attached to non-action."

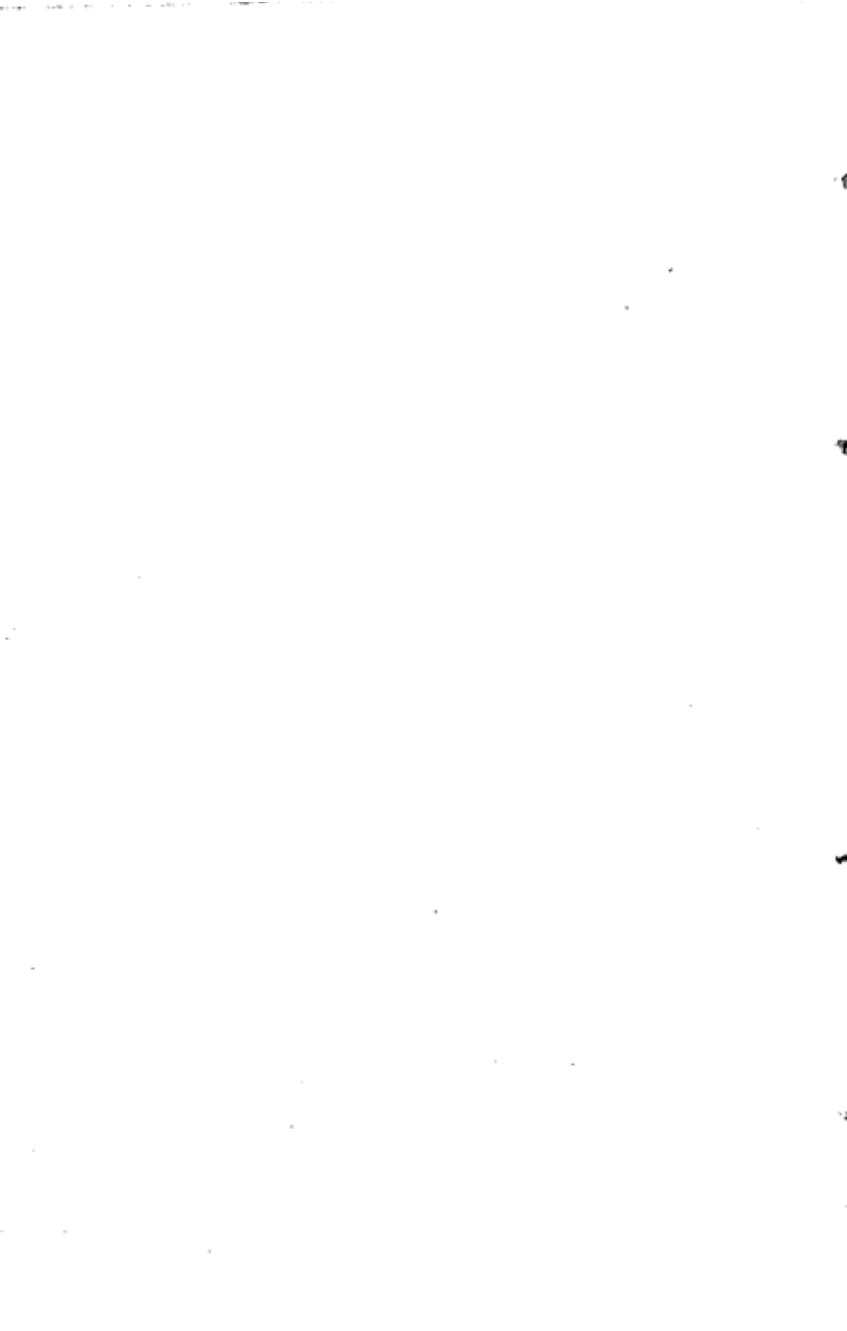
—*Bhagavad Gita, II, 47*

"Self is the master of self, who else would be the master? With self well subdued, one finds a master, difficult to find."

—*Dhammapada, 160*

"True is the Lord, true is His court, truly are our actions judged."

—*Guru Nanak Dev*



THE GITA AND YOUTH TODAY

61865

Amrik Singh Cheema

Foreword by

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METROPOLITAN BOOK CO. PVT. LTD.

1, Netaji Subhash Marg, New Delhi-110002.

Published by :

B. V. Gupta, Managing Director
Metropolitan Book Co. Pvt. Ltd.,
1, Netaji Subhash Marg, New Delhi-110002.

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Acq. No. 61865
Date 4.4.77
Call No. 294.592
Che

First Edition, 1976

Printed in India by
Agra Printing Works,
484/6, Bholanath Nagar,
Shahdara, Delhi-110032.

Dedication

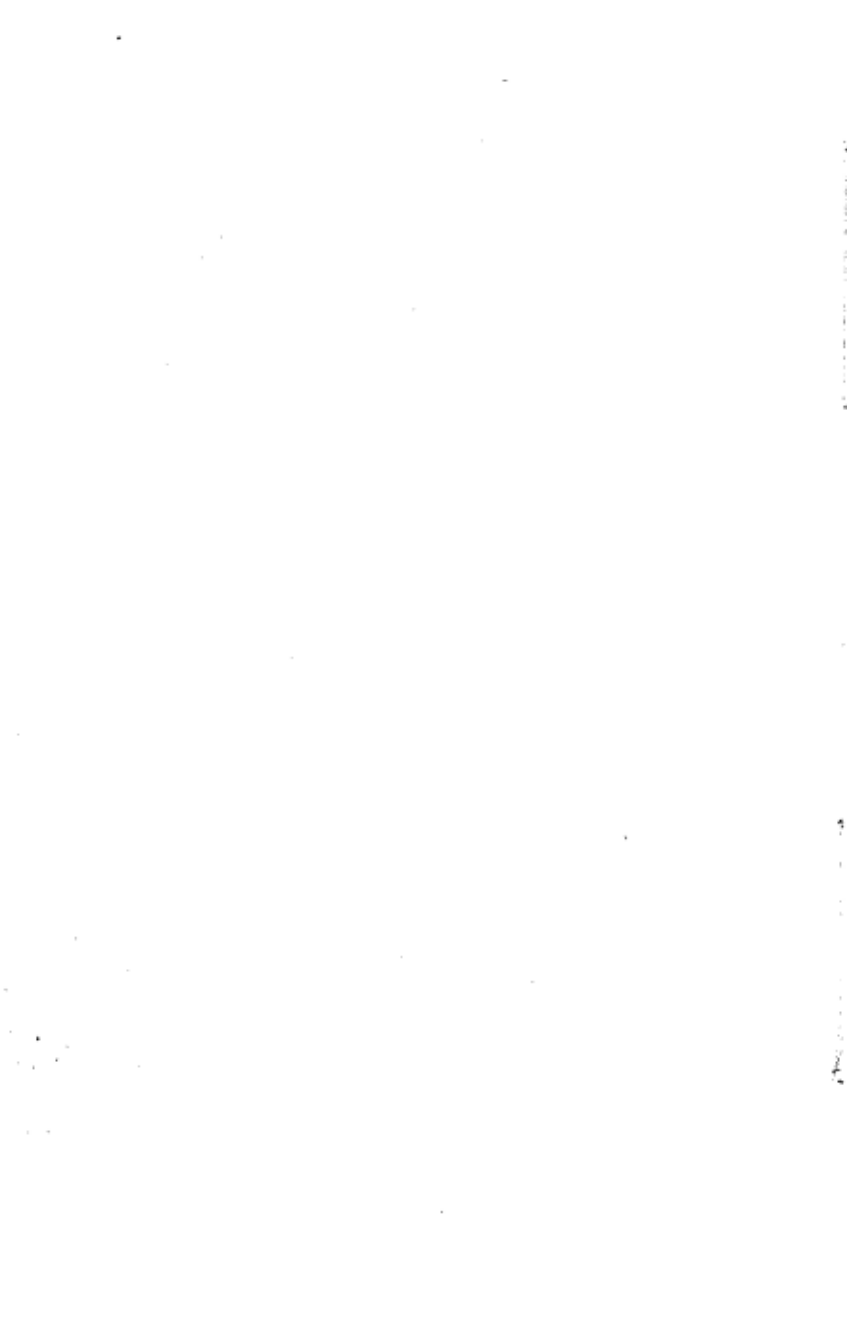
This book is dedicated
to the Youth Brotherhood,
Patiala, in the hope that
its message will be a
beacon and inspiration to the
young people of India
in their quest for spiritual
enlightenment.



Received from Triveni Book Centre Delhi on 4.4.71, Rs. 16.00

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Foreword

The Bhagavad Gita is one of the most frequently commented works among the Hindu religious texts, and it has attracted a great deal of attention among foreign Orientalists and Christian missionaries and scholars of religion from the West. Within the fold of the Hindu tradition itself, generations have turned to the Gita to seek guidance for their spiritual lives, to solve their religious and day-to-day problems. It may not be inaccurate to say that the dynamism of the Hindu tradition has been vindicated by the relevance and meaningfulness of the Gita in the long history of religion in India. This tradition has not been accessible only to scholars. It has been understood and meaningfully related to by many others as well. The glory of a work like the Gita lies in its being meaningful to people in different categories of life, and it is meaningful in different ways. From this point of view a work of this type that Dr Cheema, a well-known agricultural expert until recently associated with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, has undertaken, is most welcome.

Dr Cheema pertinently draws our attention to the importance of Karma Yoga in the Gita. What Krishna taught Arjuna is not only relevant to the great battle of Kurukshetra, fought a few thousand years ago, but also to us today, when

all of us are fighting a similar battle within ourselves and also in certain other limited ways. The orientation of this work to present-day youth and the instances in daily life in our society to which he relates the teachings of the Gita make this work a significant contribution to our understanding of "the contemporary appropriateness" of the Gita to Indian society.

I would welcome works of this type by people who are not "professional" scholars of religion but are engaged in different occupations and have different interests. Their expositions, I feel, are bound to be refreshing and full of insight. I congratulate Dr. Cheema on his efforts and hope that this work will be read with great interest by people of different ages, though it is primarily oriented towards the youth.

K. R. SUNDARARAJAN

June 30, 1976

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Introduction

My main object in writing this book is to appeal to the youth of modern India to hark back to the teachings their forefathers followed, choose what is relevant among them to present-day conditions, and adhere to them in practice.

In the prevailing state of traumatic change through which Indian society is passing, old values tend to be ignored merely because they are old, and unfortunately there are no new ones to replace them. Or we choose the superficial values of other nations, which are not suited to the genius of our country or to the traditions we have been brought up to respect.

In this context the Gita assumes great significance. So do the other works of our ancient philosophers and sages. We have inherited a great treasure-house of wisdom in the teachings of Lord Krishna, the Buddha and Guru Nanak.

But, alas, we have relegated these teachings to the background and are cultivating traits inimical to the Indian tradition and which threaten, if they continue to grow unchecked, to undermine seriously our national unity.

Therefore the time has come when we must reaffirm our faith in the Gita and its message, not merely in words but in deeds. Let us go back to the fountainhead of truth about life and relearn the lessons we have forgotten or brushed aside.

The greatest enemies of mankind, our ancient philosophical traditions teach us, are desire, anger and greed. They result in the bondage of the human soul and mental suffering. Lord Krishna has advised us to kill these enemies, and the Buddha emphasises the same point by stressing that desire is the cause of all suffering. Thus the suffering we undergo on earth can be eliminated only by eliminating evil desires.

The message Krishna gives in the Gita is that we have a right only to action, and that too only to the type of action for which we are fitted. We have no right to the fruits of such action. Let not the fruits of action be thy motive, he says in essence.

"He who abandons all desires and acts, becoming free from longing and without sense of mineness or egotism, attains peace," says the Lord.

As I said before, in these few pages I have attempted to interpret the message of the Gita to our youth, who are today greatly in need of spiritual guidance.

The future of our nation lies in the hands of our young men and women, and it is essential that they should know and practise the truth which made their forefathers great.

Man is naught unless he surrenders himself completely to God.

A. S. CHEEMA

New Delhi, July 5, 1976

Philosophy of Life

"The gateway to the ruin of the self is threefold : lust, greed and anger ; therefore one should abandon these three and reach the highest state." So says the Gita (XVI, 21-22). Most of us feel that life has only one purpose, the gratification of our senses. Anxiety binds us with a hundred chains, delivering us to lust and wrath. Most of us are busy piling up dishonest gains to satisfy our cravings. The only guideline of our lives seems to be : "I wanted this and today I have got it. I want that and a hundred more." And thus we become addicts to sensual pleasures.

Lord Krishna's message in the Gita is directed to liberate us from this web of desire and finally from the I-ness and ego forcing us to satisfy our desires. This message was given to Arjuna on the battlefield to remove his ignorance and delusion and prepare him to fight a righteous war, to fight for justice. What Krishna taught on the battlefield is meaningful to all of us today as much as it was then. As we are constituted, we are on many occasions unable to distinguish between right and wrong, and we therefore need guidance.

The conflict between the Pandavas and the Kauravas narrated in the Mahabharata, of which the Gita is the most

vital part, may signify at a cosmic level the eternal conflict between the divine and the demonic forces, and at a social level between *dharma* and *adharma*, broadly speaking between right and wrong. Selfishness on the part of the Kauravas for power, the desire for domination while ignoring the legitimate rights of their cousins, the Pandavas, to a share of their kingdom, brought about this great war. Such battles are fought daily around us in our own society, and in our own minds as well, between good and evil.

Arjuna went on to the battlefield as the commander of the Pandava army, because as a Kshatriya it was his duty to fight for a righteous cause when all the efforts of the Pandavas for peaceful reconciliation with the Kauravas had failed. But when he saw his gurus, his grandfather, uncles, cousins and other relatives and friends lined up on the opposite side, his determination to perform his duty in battle was somewhat shaken. There was confusion in his mind, resulting from the conflict between his duty and his feelings of affection for those in the other camp.

Finally, he cast aside his bow and arrow and sank into the seat of his chariot, which was being driven by Krishna, with his mind and heart full of sadness. He wanted to be "free," to become a *sanyasi* and thus surrender his social and moral responsibilities. But this new freedom which he sought was not devoid of anxiety, aloofness, doubt and insecurity. "My very being afflicted with the taint of weak compassion, I ask Thee, my mind bewildered as to the right : Which were better ? That tell me definitely. I am Thy pupil, teach me that have come to Thee." (II, 7)

Lord Krishna's response was to urge Arjuna to fight the righteous war and not yield to despair. He first appealed to Arjuna's sense of honour, "manly ethics," and reminded Arjuna of his duty. Krishna tells him not to give way to unmanliness and to cast off faintheartedness. Then he described the nature of self (*atman*) and body (*prakriti*) to drive home the point that it was needless to despair and what was needed of him was the performance of his duty, irrespective of circumstances and situations. (II, 3)

Three great truths are revealed in the second chapter of the Gita. Here Krishna points out that the *atman* is deathless and indestructible; second, that the body is transient and subjected to death and decay; and third, that situated as we are it is necessary to perform our duties and obligations (*svadharma*), but with a sense of detachment from the consequences that may follow.

First and foremost is the need to distinguish between body and self. When we fail to distinguish them, we tend to identify with the self those qualities that belong to the non-self (body).

Krishna says: "Know what is indestructible. No one has the power to destroy it. Bodies are destined to be destroyed. The *atman* is indestructible; it is not the *atman* that is slain, but the body. So fight on, O Bharata." (II, 17-18)

"Just as a person throws away wornout and torn garments and puts on new ones, so does the soul cast off the wornout body and take on a new one." (II, 22)

"As the soul passes in this body through the three states of childhood, youth and age, so it enters another body after death." (II, 13)

"Thou grieveest for what deserves not, and yet speakest words of wisdom. The wise indeed are those who never lament over those who have departed or are to depart." (II, 11)

The above verses need no explanation. We are afraid of death because throughout our whole life we have been concerned only with the demands of our body and we have seldom paid attention to the self. All evil in society revolves round this misunderstanding. Somehow we are convinced that the body is supreme and the self is only secondary, and therefore all efforts must be made, legitimate or not legitimate, to keep the senses ever pleased.

The first step in the right direction should therefore be to acknowledge the existence of the self, besides and behind the body, together constituting what one could call a human being. The visible body is not the whole of reality. There is within and behind this body the unseen but most active "master of the house"—the self. This self does not die, nor is it destroyed with the body.

So Krishna tells Arjuna that to grieve over the possibility of death is not rational. What is destroyed in death is not the self but the body. To press home this point Krishna says that whoever is born is bound to die and be reborn, casting away the body like casting away one garment for another.

"For to one that is born death is certain, and birth is certain for one that has died; therefore the thing being unavoidable, thou shouldst not mourn." (II, 27)

After making this basic analysis of the body and the

self, Krishna goes on to remind Arjuna of his *dharma* as a Kshatriya in very forceful words : "O Arjuna, even when thinking about your duty, you cannot leave your path because your first duty is to fight a war, and such a fight takes you to heaven. If you do not fight, you incur sin." (II, 31-33)

Dharma means the character of a being. It is the essential nature of a being which determines his mode of behaviour. So long as our conduct is in conformity with our essential nature, we are acting in the right way. *Dharma* has also come to signify one's duties in terms of the position one holds in society. As a Kshatriya one's duty consists in protecting the members of society, and also in fighting for justice if necessary. *Adharma* then would mean lack of conformity with a being's nature or character, and also failure to discharge one's social obligations.

Lord Krishna exhorts : "Treating alike pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, get ready for the fight. That way only you will not incur sin." (II, 38)

This is a very important lesson for young people. It is our duty to fight the evils around us and to defend ourselves, society and the nation from such evils and enemies. We should also fight against desire, anger, pride, greed, infatuation, all of which take hold of men and divert them to the path of domination and self-seeking. We should exercise proper control over our senses. These are the Kauravas within us, against whom we should be vigilant and fight.

At the level of society we may not deliberately seek to fight. But if forced to fight in weeding out social evils and oppression, it becomes our duty to take up the challenge

boldly and relentlessly. In praise of such an attitude and readiness to play our part as responsible members of society, Krishna says that those who fight for their *dharma* enter heaven without *ever* performing difficult sacrifices. (II, 32)

Guru Gobind Singh is an example of a person who fought for justice. His was a fight for right against wrong. He had to sacrifice his whole family to save *dharma* from the domination of *adharma*. Lord Krishna says: "When there is a decline of righteousness and the rise of unrighteousness, I myself descend to overthrow the forces of evil and to protect the good and to uphold *dharma*." (IV, 7-8) This very reasoning was advanced by Guru Gobind Singh, who said that God had sent him into the world to uphold *dharma*.

We should not become very emotional over the "ups and downs" in life. We should do the duties required of us according to the situations in which we are placed. Both happiness and misery may come and go, but we should not lose our balance of mind. We should have faith in God and accept every happening as His will, without joy or sorrow.

We seem to think of God only when we are in difficulties. It was my personal experience that I never thanked God for the part He played in making my career successful, but I always remembered Him when I was in difficulties. This was wrong, but this is how most of us act. We should ask God nothing when we pray to Him. Prayers should be an expression of gratitude to God for what we are, and how we have been placed in life. This attitude is indeed difficult, but faith in Him can slowly bring us to this state of mind.

Speaking of faith in God, the Gita does not refer to this or that form of religion but speaks only of the impulses which are expressed in all these forms, namely the need and urge to find God and to understand our relationship with Him. The God whom we all worship is one and the same. The difference lies in the approach to the one and the same reality. The Vedas rightly declare ; "Reality is one, but sages call it by many names." God is the rewarder of all who seek Him, in whatever name and in whichever form.

So my young brothers, love and respect all religions because their teachings are dear to us, the seekers of God. They show us the rich variety of paths to reach God, and it is the greatest sin to hate any religion. This should be our *sadharana dharma* : "We should love all and hate none."

My young brothers and sisters, follow the path of righteousness, good actions and dedication to duty. Free your bodies from worldly chains. And above all have faith in God.

CHAPTER TWO

Science of Right Action or Karma Yoga

Having urged Arjuna to perform his *dharma*, Lord Krishna goes on to explain the details of Karma Yoga, where emphasis is placed on the performance of one's duties and on the fulfilment of obligations without attachment.

Krishna gives this explanation of the science of right action in Chapters II, III, IV, and V of the Gita as well as in its concluding chapter.

The word Karma is derived from *kri*, which means "to do" and Krishna defines Yoga as *yogah karmesu kausalam* (Gita II, 50), as "a special skill in performing action." Some understanding of Karma is essential to follow the complexity of right action the Lord prescribes. Karma means action, good or bad, as it includes all actions brought about by thoughts, words and deeds. In fact, Karma covers everything a man does. Karma is the order of cause and effect. Every action produces an effectlike reaction.

We may therefore speak of Karma as the law of cause and effect. The past influences the present, but does not dominate it. The past is the background against which life

goes on in the present, and the present in turn influences the future. Though determined somewhat by the past, the responsibility for using the present for good or bad lies with the individual.

The world operates according to the law of cause and effect. Man himself is responsible for his happiness and his misery. His present is shaped by his past acts, and his future by the present. Man is the master of his own destiny, since though he is a child of the past he is the parent of the future. Life moves in a cycle governed by the law of dependent origin, and there are 12 links in this chain :

1. Ignorance is the primary root of all evil, greed, anger, desire. This ignorance prolongs one's wanderings in the world of rebirths.
2. Volitional activities such as actions of body, speech and mind arise through ignorance. This is the causal link. It includes both moral and immoral actions, and these actions shorten or prolong respectively the cycle of rebirths.
3. Through these activities arise the relinking consciousness, the consciousness which functions as a link with another, or the next, existence. A person's actions are responsible for rebirth.
4. Mind and matter arise through relinking consciousness. There can be no continuing process of mental and physical existence without this consciousness. Mind and matter mean here the Karma-determined results of mental and physical phenomena.

5. Through mind and matter arise the six senses—the five sensory organs and the mind.
6. The sensory and mental impressions arise from these senses.
7. Through impressions arise feelings, and all feelings are conditioned by impressions.
8. Through feelings arise cravings and desires.
9. Through desire arises attachment. There are four types of attachment common to man : attachment to sensuality, to false views, to wrong rites and rituals, and to self-deception.
10. The process of becoming arises from attachment. This attachment gives rise to the cycle of becoming, which manifests itself as the life force for future rebirth.
11. Through the process of becoming arises rebirth. Becoming is compared to a seed which generates a new being, a tree or other living shape.
12. Through rebirth arises old age and death. Without rebirth, man can be saved from the inevitable consequences of sorrow, pain, grief and despair.

The first two are determined by past experience. The next four are concerned with present existence, which is the result of past actions. The next three—craving, attachment and the process of becoming—are also connected with present existence, but it is in our power to alter or modify the quality of life force which continues in the next birth.

The last two links are the sum total of our present activities. The cycle continues in this process until ignorance

and craving, the key links in the chain, are totally annihilated. If craving is destroyed, there will be no rebirth and the cycle ends. By following proper action, (Karma Yoga) this craving can be destroyed. Buddha suggests the method of *nirvana*. Guru Granth suggests Nam Yog. All such teachings lead to one goal: the need to end craving and attachment in order to break the cycle of rebirth.

Now what are moral and immoral actions? Immoral actions produce the effect of misery, though not immediately, and are rooted in greed, anger and delusion. They are expressed in killing, stealing, lack of chastity, lying, frivolous talk, slander, harsh language, covetousness, ill-will and false views. The evil effects of killing are constant grief and fear, while those of stealing are poverty and wretchedness. Unchaste living creates enmity, and lying and frivolous talk results in vilification and loss of credibility. Slander results in the dissolution of friendship, and harsh language causes one to be detested by others. Covetousness results in a state of mental tension and dissatisfaction arising from unfulfilled desires. False views mean seeing things wrongly, without understanding, and they lead to attachment, lack of wisdom and dullwittedness.

Good Karma produces effects on the plane of desire. The moral actions which produce it are generosity, morality, meditation, reverence, service, transference of merit, rejoicing in the merit of others, hearing the scriptures as well as expounding them and forming correct views.

Coming to the Gita, we see that Krishna tells Arjuna that it is not proper to abstain from action on the ground of

doubts and difficulties. One has to perform one's duties, and what matters here most is the mental attitude with which an action is performed. The goodness or badness of Karma lies precisely in the mental state accompanying one's action.

Lord Krishna criticises those who follow the Vedas blindly and perform Vedic injunctions while they are filled with personal ambition and desires. So the Lord begins with His main theme of Karma Yoga—work without desire for the fruits. What is needed is *nishkamakarma* and not the cessation of action. This is what Krishna wants Arjuna to realise and thus be freed from the tensions of forces pulling in opposite directions, between duty on one hand and fraternal feelings on the other.

Krishna explains how men should act. He says : "Yours is the duty only in action well performed, and not in the fruits thereof. Fruits of what you do should not be your motive, so also let there not be in thee any attachment to inaction." (II, 47)

An individual's duty is to perform all operations and to fulfil all obligations to the best of his ability. We have examples of farmers who, after much unrelenting toil, find their efforts rendered futile by floods, storms and droughts. When such a farmer naturally expects an equitable return for his hard work, he is bound to feel miserable in the face of unforeseen natural calamities. At this point one should remember that success and failure do not depend on the individual alone but also on other factors and developments which cannot be anticipated. As Giordano Bruno has remark-

ed : "I have fought. That is much; victory is in the hands of fate."

It is perhaps easy to give such advice. It may however be difficult to fit it into developments and conditions in the present age, where we can discern broadly two types of attitude to work. One is : "I have the right to enjoy the fruits of my labour." The other is ; "If I have no such right, why should I work at all ?" Yet I suppose it is our responsibility to develop a different attitude, an attitude to action such as the Gita urges us to develop : "You have to act earnestly, but without any desire or right for the rewards." We have to accept with equanimity whatever consequences follow from this action.

Brothers, let us adopt a *sattvic* attitude to work, which enjoins us to do our duty without any desire for rewards or results, and shun attitudes tainted by *rajas* and *tamas* which encourage us to perform actions with the motive of personal gain. This is of course difficult as it requires some degree of self-mastery, conquest of anger, pride and ambition, but it is not impossible. We should not let I-ness come between our actions and ourselves. What we need is the attitude of mental equipoise which the Gita urges us to develop. "Fixed in Yoga, do thy work, abandoning all attachment with an even mind in success and failures. This evenness of mind is called Yoga." (II,48) Here the Lord advises us to accomplish this balance of mind in the midst of success and failure. But this is only possible if we are detached from the fruits of action.

We have to curb our desires and ultimately remove

them altogether from our minds, because these desires prevent the mind from becoming pure. For "one who is led by intelligence casts away, even here in this very life, both the good and the evil. Therefore strive for the accomplishment of Yoga—the skill and the secret of the science and art of doing things." (II, 50)

The practice of Karma Yoga enjoins us to plan and to act vigorously, but with a detached mind. Our duty is to work and leave to Him when to give us our reward, and how much. It is only natural that one wishes to be rewarded amply for one's labour. But this expectation should not develop into a craving which leads to attachment and consequent bondage.

Now what are the qualities of one who practises Karma Yoga? The following qualities are enumerated by Krishna in the second chapter :

1. Stable intelligence :

one puts away all mental desires and concentrates fully on the *atman*. (II, 55)

2. Settled intelligence :

the mind is untroubled by pleasure or sorrow, by success or failure, one is free from passion, fear, anger and desire. (II, 56)

3. Firmly set intelligence :

(a) good and evil have no effect : one accepts with pleasure whatever falls to one's lot (II, 57);

(b) one uses one's senses for good, and can withdraw all one's senses whenever one likes (II, 58);

(c) body and mind are under perfect control; and

- (d) firmness in action but without any desire for its fruits, and fully firm on Yoga and devoted to God.

4. Purity of mind.

If the mind of man dwells always on the objects of the senses, then there is attachment. Attachment brings more desires, and unsatisfied desires cause anger. The basic quality of a Karma Yogi is therefore control of one's senses and emotions and maintaining a balance in spite of being actively involved in action (II, 63). The horses of the senses are not to be unyoked from one chariot, but they must be controlled by the reins of the mind. A disciplined mind moves among the objects of the senses free from attachment and aversion, while on the other hand the impure mind is full of desires, with no power of concentration, no peace and no happiness.

The Lord illustrates this with two beautiful similes. He says : "When the mind runs after the senses, it carries away the understanding just like the wind, which tosses a rudderless boat on the waves of the water." (II, 67)

"Just as the ocean does not change its level, though receiving the waters of rivers, so too all desires enter the man with an equipoise of mind without affecting him. Such a person attains peace without any sense of mineness." (II, 70-71)

Young brothers, in the human body the senses, when not controlled, are like flooded rivers that are unmanageable and destructive. When we are caught in this flood of desires we are doomed forever, since we are simply swept away and have no choice. Therefore our first duty is to control our minds. We must detach our sense organs from their objects

of enjoyment. Then desire will not affect us. We must have firm faith in God and surrender ourselves to Him, pray to Him and meditate day and night. This should be done to prevent the sense organs running after material objects and to enforce sense control.

A state of spiritual perfection cannot be reached merely by renouncing action for certain types of action must be performed. *Naishkarmya* is that state where, while doing and acting, one is not affected by its results. The natural law is that we are bound by the results of our actions. Every action has its natural reaction, and so it is a source of bondage, committing the soul to the world of becoming and preventing its union with the supreme reality. What is demanded is not renunciation of action but renunciation of the results or disowning of reaction.

Krishna criticises those who renounce action but nevertheless brood over the objects of the senses. He calls them people whose conduct is false, hypocrites. According to Him, those whose conduct may be described as true are persons who control their sense organs through the mind without attachment to any object and continue to perform desireless actions. The Lord insists again and again on the need to control the mind and also on the need to perform actions. They are part and parcel of the same effort. "Action is better than inaction ; even the maintenance of physical life needs some action. The world is bound by action. Therefore, perform action as a sacrifice, free from attachment, O son of Kunti." (III, 89)

All work must be considered worship. The Lord

affirms ; "Perform all work and duty that has to be done. Man reaches the highest state by doing his duty without attachment." (III, 19) Krishna further advises that one should act for the welfare of society. He gives the example of King Janaka, who, although he had realised *paramatman* by practising Karma Yoga, continued to discharge his duties as a ruler.

Gita III, 21 is very important for our political leaders. It tells us that whatever a great man does ordinary people imitate him, and that they follow whatever standards he sets. Common people indeed follow the standards set by the elite. But such leaders as live largely in isolation from the people and adopt strange manners fail to become right examples for the masses. After elections most politicians generally behave like bosses, leading an affluent life, enjoying all pleasures and comforts. They thus cease to set a good example to other people. Let us recall how Mahatma Gandhi lived and compare his way of life with that of many of our present leaders. The contrast is striking.

The Gita talks of *naishkarmya* and *loksamgraha*. The same message has been taught by Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha and Nanak in different ways. But all these lessons have been totally forgotten today. Now most of the leaders in our country and elsewhere think only of themselves. They practise me-tooism more than capitalism, socialism or communism. Leaders and workers must understand and note the verses III, 25-26, which urge on us : "Everybody must act with the motive of maintaining world order. The wise man should not confuse the minds of the ignorant, who are

attached to action. Let the wise man act in his own way with the right spirit, with concentration on Yoga, inspiring others to follow him." The struggle for Indian independence was a very good example of this type of action. It demonstrated that people should set an example of service without any selfish motive. Such an example awakens the national conscience and encourages greater participation by the masses.

In III, 30, Krishna again exhorts Arjuna to prepare for battle. He says: "Shake off this fever caused by ignorance. Stop hoping for worldly rewards. Fix your mind on the *atman*. Free yourself from the ego. Dedicate your actions to Me. Then go forward and fight." (III, 30) In a later context we find Krishna repeating this appeal to Arjuna thus: "Where is your sword? Discriminate, draw it and slash delusion. Take your stand on Karma Yoga." (IV, 42)

One must stand up for his rights and not run away from battle either through fear or doubts about the result. One should also not seek his selfish interests in it. Success or failure in the fight is of little consequence, but the dedication of one's self, discarding all expectations and attachments through steadied intellect is all that matters on the path of Karma Yoga. This is possible only if one sees the presence of the divine in all things of the world and discards his ego-consciousness. One must understand that one has no power in one's self other than what the Lord has given, and that one is only an instrument of the Lord. One should not interfere with His plans but follow them with all humility.

In this connection Krishna reminds Arjuna of his *svadharma* and encourages him to fulfil his appointed task

which is valuable even if it is imperfectly done. One needs perseverance (*sraddha*) in what one does and should not waste his energy by moving from one job to another, all done halfheartedly. Goodness denotes perfection in quality.

Krishna sounds a warning: "The emotions that prompt a man to commit sin are desire and anger. They are insatiable, like fire. The more you feed them, the more they grow. Therefore consider them the greatest enemies of mankind." (III, 37) The same idea is also expressed in the *Manu Smriti*: "Our desires cannot be pacified with the enjoyment of their objects, because the more we enjoy them the more they increase, like the burning fire which increases more and more with more oblation." (II, 94)

No doubt the senses are more powerful than their objects. But greater than them all is the *atman*. (III, 42) We know that the senses can be effectively controlled by a disciplined mind. For without the cooperation of the mind the senses can neither perceive objects nor produce the sensations of pleasure and pain. But how is one to discipline one's mind? This is where one requires will power, which is properly the expression of *buddhi*, intellect. The will directs the mind, and through the mind the senses, towards the object.

The *Mahabharata* says: "O desire, I know thy root, thou art born of *samkalpa* or thought. I shall not think of thee, and thou shall cease to exist." The will ultimately stimulates the mind to lively and energetic action. The will in turn is subject to its source of power, the *atman*. It is to this basic source that we should therefore turn our entire discipline and practice. Hence knowing one's self has become

very important in religious life. The way to self-realisation is through self-conquest, which must be effected through self-control. Guidance comes from no other power except from one's own inner light.

This is not a task that can be completed in a matter of ten days or so. It is a lifelong process of raising one's consciousness step by step. Having raised one's consciousness, one becomes a yogi. Such a yogi sees "action in inaction and inaction in action" and he has "accomplished his work." (IV, 18) "Having abandoned attachment to the fruits, ever contented, he does nothing, though he is ever engaged in work. Having no desires with his self under control, performing actions by body, giving up all desires, he commits no wrong." (IV, 20-21). He is contented, free from pleasure and pain, free from jealousy, and remains the same in success and failure. (IV, 22)

"The yogi performs actions with body, organs, mind, controlling the senses, abandoning attachment for the purification of the soul." (V, 11) The Gita further says that a yogi is one who can resist the rush of desire and anger (V, 23) and does the work he ought to do, without seeking its fruits. (VI, 1) When actions are performed by a wise man or an ignorant person, the body is the same, but the mind is different. The Lord advises: "Let a man lift himself by himself. Let him not degrade himself. The self is the friend of self, and self alone is the enemy of self." (IV, 5)

The supreme is within us and nowhere outside. The supreme is attainable by him who is prepared to lose his life in order to find it. For the greater part of our existence we

are not aware of the self in us, because our attention is engaged by objects which we like or dislike. We must get away from them to become aware of the divine in us. If we do not realise this and our Karma is bad in ordinary life the true self becomes our enemy. The universal self can be a friend or foe of the individual self. If we abjure petty craving and do not exert our selfish will, we become the channel to the universal self. If the individual self offers itself, then it gets guidance and advice from the supreme self. We are called upon to give up the lower self in order to keep the higher self intact. So our future is in our hands.

In the concluding verse, Krishna repeats that restraint and freedom from desire are essential for spiritual perfection. Attachment to objects and the sense of ego are the characteristics of our lower nature. If our impulses are under control and if the individual self surrenders to the universal self, then the latter becomes our guide. Everyone of us thus has a chance to rise or fall: "For him who has conquered his lower self by the higher latter self, the latter becomes a friend. Otherwise it acts as an enemy." (VI, 6)

If we are to rise and seek our true self we must conquer our lower nature, our love for worldly possessions. *Naishkarmya* is not withdrawal from work. It is inner renunciation. Work is man's homage to God. "He whose understanding is unattached, who has subdued his self, and from whom desire has fled, comes through renunciation to the supreme state." (XVIII, 49)

Thus the Gita is a mandate for planned, detached and devoted action, with full dedication to God.

APPENDIX

Essential Features of Right Action

Patience : Patience is essential for a believer in Karma Yoga. Tension and anxiety do not help. We are paying in suffering for our past debts, and we should not create more suffering for the future. In rejoicing, we should be thankful to God instead of making a show of wealth and power which negates the value of the previous good Karma, for which we have been rewarded with this fruit. It is very important to bear this in mind, as we usually tend to act in such a way as to increase our debit side in the balance sheet of Karma. We need to cultivate the virtue of patience, which brings forth peace, success, happiness and security.

Confidence : Understanding the mechanics of Karma gives us confidence. So long as we perform good deeds we are safe. Confidence gives strength and deepens our peace and happiness. It makes us comfortable and courageous. He who has no confidence in himself can never have faith in God.

Self-reliance : Now we understand that what we are today is due to our past Karma, and our future is determined by our present Karma. But the glory of the future is limitless and is dependent on our self-reliance. Self-effort is the pivot of right action.

Power : The practice of Karma Yoga makes us powerful. We become fearless and death holds no terrors for us.

To make things simpler, let us examine the following three points so that all efforts are directed towards right action :

(a) *From where have we come ?* We have come out of the past, out of the Karma we have performed, our past vices and virtues, the labours we have not finished, out of our own desires. People with a bad Karma are born of low status, but those who have done good are born in good families. Thus we have come to the present to improve upon our past.

(b) *Why are we here ?* We shall keep going round and round till our last desire is annihilated. For the wise person it is an opportunity to rid himself of the burden he has accumulated in the past. Then why wait for another chance ? Start doing so now. Kill your desires. But most of us miss this ideal opportunity, and instead increase our cycles of deaths and births.

(c) *Where do we want to go ?* Those who follow the path of right action become free from desire. They are released, and there is no further cycle for them. But most of us increase our debit balance and further continue to suffer. The Gita wants us to break this cycle in our present lifetime.

Karma Yoga and Duty

Right action and duty overlap, and it is very difficult to define them. The idea of duty varies with different nations and with different people. It is too hard to generalise duty for all types of persons under various conditions. The Gita frequently alludes to duties dependent on one's nature and one's position in society. Does this mean then that Krishna supports the caste system, as it is caste duties with which we

are born ? This is not correct. The underlying idea is that we can perform those duties better which we have learnt from our families and from our surroundings in comparison with those we learn outside this circle.

A farmer's son can be a good farmer and a trader's son a good trader. So when we talk of right action we can act rightly only if we have some experience. To begin with, we can perform our inherited duties. The Gita repeatedly emphasises the need to adhere to one's duty instead of going about attempting to perform the duties of others. The greatest problem of human nature is that a man never examines himself but imagines he can do wonders everywhere and considers himself fit for any work. The performance of one's duty may not often be easy or pleasant. It may have to be "oiled" by love, but if love is not present the duty will be performed badly.

The best example is the role of the mother in the family. Her position is the highest in it. Love of God alone is higher than love of mother. The best way to learn and exercise unselfishness is in the role of a mother. A mother always thinks of her children first and then of herself. She does not desire any reward for the service she renders her children. This is the example we should follow in performing our duty. Our duty is to worship our parents and teachers, who give us selfless love and service, and look upon them as divinity manifested on earth. We must rise by performing the duties apportioned to us, and go on gathering strength until we reach the highest state. The following story in the Mahabharata clarifies the importance and sacredness of duty.

A young *sanyasi* went to a forest and meditated, worshipped and practised Yoga for a long time. One day when he was sitting under a tree after years of hard work and practice, some dry leaves fell on his head. He looked up and saw a crow and a crane fighting on the top of the tree, and this made him very angry. He said : "What, how dare you throw these dry leaves on my head?" With these words he glared angrily at them, and such was the *sanyasi's* power that fire flashed from his eyes and reduced the birds to ashes. The *sanyasi* was very pleased, almost overjoyed, at his acquisition of yogic power.

After a time, he had to go to a neighbouring town to beg for food. He stood at a door and said : "Mother, give me food." A voice from inside the house replied : "Wait a little, my son." The young *sanyasi* grew angry and said to himself : "You wretched woman, how dare you make me wait? You do not know my power yet." While he was thinking thus the voice said : "Boy, don't think too much of yourself. Here is neither crow nor crane."

The *sanyasi* was astonished. He waited silently at the door. At last a woman came out and he fell at her feet and said : "Mother, how did you know that?" She said : "My boy, I do not know any Yoga or yogic practice. I am an ordinary housewife. I made you wait because my husband was ill and I was nursing him. All my life I have struggled to do my duty. Before my marriage I did my duty to my parents. Now that I am married, I do my duty to my husband. That is all I practise. But by doing my duty I have become illumined. Thus I could read your thoughts

and knew what you had done in the forest. If you want to know something higher than this, go to the market of a certain town where you will find a Vyadha* who will tell you something that you will be very glad to learn."

The *sanyasi* thought: "Why should I go to that town, and to a Vyadha?" But after what the woman had told him he was curious to know more. So he went to the town as directed. When he found the market, he saw at some distance a fat Vyadha chopping meat with big knives while talking and bargaining with different people. The young man said to himself: "Lord help me. Is this the man from whom I am going to learn? He is the incarnation of a demon if he is anything." In the meantime this man looked up and said: "O Swamin, did that housewife send you here? Take a seat until I have done my business." The *sanyasi* thought: "What will happen to me here?" Nevertheless, he sat down and the man went on with his work. After he had finished, he gathered his earnings and said to the *sanyasi*: "Come, sir, come to my home."

On reaching home, the Vyadha gave him a seat, saying "Wait here," and went into the house. He then washed his old father and mother, fed them and did whatever else he could to make them comfortable. After this he returned to the *sanyasi* and said: "Now, sir, you have come here to see me. What can I do for you?" The *sanyasi* asked him a few questions about the nature of the individual self and God. The Vyadha gave him a discourse which forms a part of the

*The lowest class in ancient society who worked as hunters and butchers.

Mahabharata called the Vyadha Gita. It contained a very deep insight into Vedanta. When the Vyadha finished speaking, the *sanyasi* was astonished. He asked his host : "Why are you in that body ? With such knowledge as yours why are you in a Vyadha's body and doing such filthy, degrading work ?" "My son," replied the Vyadha, "no duty is degrading, no duty is impure. My birth placed me in these circumstances and environment. In my boyhood I learnt this trade. I am unattached and I try to do my duty well. I try to do my duty as a householder, and I try to do all I can to make my father and mother happy. I neither know any Yoga, nor have I become a *sanyasi*, nor did I go out of the world into a forest. Nevertheless, all that you have heard and seen has come to me through doing the duty which belongs to my position without attachment."

One saint describes the secret of work in this manner : "Let the end and the means be joined into one." When you are performing any work, do not think of anything beyond. Do it as worship, and devote your whole time and energy to it. Thus, in the Mahabharata story, the Vyadha and the woman did their duty cheerfully and wholeheartedly. The result was that they became illuminated, thereby showing clearly that the performance of one's duties in life, without any concern for their results, leads us to the highest realisation of self.

The individual who is concerned at the results of his actions grumbles about the nature of the duties which have fallen to his lot. To the unattached worker all duties are equally good and form efficient instruments with which

selfishness and sensuality may be killed and the freedom of the soul secured. Competition rouses envy, and this kills the kindness of the heart. This does not mean that we should not compete with others. Competition is undoubtedly a key to success in life, but we must compete in a spirit of love and friendliness as well as with detachment.

Detachment must be the practical principle of our life, but it must not make *sanyasis* but Karma Yogis. To one who grumbles, all work is distasteful. Nothing will ever satisfy him, and his whole life is doomed to failure and disappointment. Let us therefore work on, doing as best we can whatever happens to be our duty and ever ready to put our shoulders to the wheel. Then surely shall we see the light.

Karma and Character

Good Karma, good character and adherence to one's duty are all meant to bring about total happiness, the goal of human life. Character is the aggregate of tendencies, the sum total of the bent of one's mind. Adversity and prosperity, good and evil have all an equal share in moulding one's character, and in some cases adversity is a greater teacher than prosperity. Karma also plays its part, and good Karma has to be acquired through many lives.

Man is the centre of all attraction and repulsion. Good, bad, misery, prosperity are all running towards him and trying to cling to him. Out of these he fashions what we may describe as his personal character. He has the choice and the free will to retain whatever he wants and reject the

rest. Two Sanskrit words are important in this connection : One is *pravritti* (turning towards) and the other is *nivritti* (turning away). The turning towards we call "I and mine." Here there is desire for wealth, money, power, fame, all accumulated by good and bad means around one centre, oneself. This is a natural tendency, the tendency to acquire and possess.

When this tendency begins to break then there is *nivritti* or going away. This means self-abnegation, readiness to sacrifice everything for others. Such persons attain the perfection of Karma Yoga. This seems to be the fundamental teaching of all religions, but who practises this these days? Religion is considered only in terms of going to the gurdwara or to the temple. There is a scramble for possessions, grabbing land, grabbing houses, collecting black money and similar acquisitions. For whom is all this done and why? Just to please oneself and to feel that one is big and powerful. Man is driven by different motives such as to acquire fame, money, power or to attain heaven. Unfortunately, there are a few who work for work's sake.

Have patience, practise love, truth, and be unselfish. We have the right to work, but not to its fruits. If you are doing the task assigned to you properly, never think of the results. Intense activity is necessary to develop a good character, but this has to be done in a peaceful, restrained way. The ideal man finds activity in silence and solitude and inactivity in activity. He has learnt the secret of restraint and control of mind. The householder who is a pivot of society, as most of us are, should be devoted to God, to his duty

and work without any selfish desires. He should earn his livelihood by honest means.

He should renounce all desire and attachment for reward. He should not lie, nor cheat nor rob. He should be loyal to his parents and children. He must not irritate others with his talk and exhibit restlessness. He must not give way to anger or lose his temper. One should never brag about oneself. Never say "mine," for this brings misery. Never say "my body," "my house," "my child." All these possessions are not yours. They come and go according to the laws of nature, and we should be free as "witnesses." The most important duty is to those of your relatives who are poor.

The Gita does not teach that one should not receive a reward for his labour. Money is to be acquired by hard work and by using honest means, and should be spent on one's parents and children and on the poor. Activity, fearlessness, honesty and the performance of duty with a sense of detachment, make one superior to a yogi who meditates all his life, though still perhaps attached in some way. Karma Yoga tells us to enjoy the beauty of the world but not to get attached to it. It urges us to move throughout the world freely and work as much as we can. But we shall never be contaminated so long as we are not attached.

The essence of living is to work hard, and to regard work as worship and offering to God. We are His devotees, and we should be grateful to Him for whatever He gives us. We should sacrifice our little selves and pray daily: "I sacrifice myself unto Thee. Nothing for me, good, bad or indifferent.

Everything is Yours. Take whenever You want." Let us be detached from our phenomenal self and let there be a constant striving after perfection.

Let us look into the teaching of one sage who actually preached Karma Yoga, the Lord Buddha. He said :

"I do not care to know the various theories of God and soul."

"Do good and be good and this will take you to freedom and to truth."

"He works best who works without any motives, neither for money nor for fame nor for anything else, and when a man can do that he will be a Buddha."

Lord Buddha gave practical shape to the theory of Karma Yoga. His teachings emphasise moderation, the middle path avoiding lust on the one hand and self-mortification on the other. It is because of our failure to understand the four noble truths that we go through the round of rebirths. We have to understand the following : suffering ; the origin of suffering ; the extinction of suffering ; and the path that leads to the extinction of suffering. Birth is suffering, decay is suffering, death is suffering, and not to have one's desires fulfilled is suffering.

The origin of suffering lies in the craving which binds us to pleasure and lust. But how does this craving arise and where does it have its roots ? We are drawn towards beautiful, attractive and pleasurable things through the eyes, nose, ears, tongue, body and mind. Visual objects, sounds, smells, tastes, bodily impressions and mental ideas indeed are fascinating and pleasurable. Thus craving arises and takes

its roots. The noble truth of the extinction of suffering consists in the extinction of this craving, forsaking it, and liberating and detaching oneself from it. The extinction of greed, the extinction of anger, the extinction of delusion is called *nirvana*.

The purpose of Karma Yoga in the Gita is also for the complete elimination and extinction of this craving. Buddha teaches the "noble eightfold path" for the same purpose, and it is almost similar to Karma Yoga. Its components are : (1) Right understanding, (2) Right thought, (3) Right speech, (4) Right action, (5) Right livelihood, (6) Right effort, (7) Rightmindfulness and (8) Right concentration.

1. Right understanding is the understanding of the four noble truths, namely the nature of suffering, its origin and extinction, and the path that leads to the extinction of suffering.

2. Right thought is free from lust, ill-will and cruelty. We should think about right things and reject what is wrong, and we should always nourish in our minds only those which are noble and beautiful. Right thought must never have the slightest evil in it. We must be quite sure that our thoughts are always exalted, kind and generous.

Another important aspect of right thought is its correctness. We often entertain in our minds incorrect or false impressions about people just because we are prejudiced or ignorant. We think that a person is bad and therefore conclude that all his actions must be evil. When we attribute base motives to another person without any factual foundation we are guilty of false thinking. When we fix our attention

on the evil in a man instead of the good, we strengthen and encourage that evil, while on the other hand with attention to right thought we would strengthen and encourage the good.

3. Right speech is abstaining from lying, from tale-bearing, from harsh language, and from vain talk. A man who abstains from lying is devoted to the truth, is reliable, worthy of confidence, and does not deceive others. He never knowingly tells a lie either for his own advantage or for another person's or for any other advantage whatever.

Right speech requires that a man should avoid carrying tales. What he has heard in one place he should not repeat elsewhere so as to avoid causing dissension. A person who uses right speech unites those who are divided, and he encourages those who are united. Concord gladdens him and he rejoices in spreading it with his words. He also avoids harsh language. Rather, he uses such words as are gentle and soothing to one's ears, and words which go to the heart, which are courteous and friendly and agreeable. Finally, he avoids vain talk. He speaks at the right time, in accordance with the facts, and only what is useful. He employs arguments which are moderate and full of sense.

4. Right action is abstaining from killing, from stealing, and from illicit sexual intercourse. The man who follows the path of righteousness does not kill living beings. He bears no weapons, is conscientious, full of sympathy, and is anxious for the welfare of all living beings. He respects and protects the possessions of others. His sex life is clean and untarnished by low desires.

5. Right living is a manner of existence which causes no

harm to any living thing. We should not obtain our livelihood by harming anybody. Thus selling of alcohol is not a right livelihood because the seller is profiting from the harm he causes other people. Further, the merchant who in the course of trade is dishonest and cheats his customers is not following the right path. The merchant has a right to a reasonable profit, the lawyer and doctor have a right to a reasonable fee, but all must be trustworthy and perform their duties conscientiously.

6. Right effort comprises four factors: the effort to avoid, to overcome, to develop, and to maintain. One should strengthen one's will to prevent the growth of unwholesome things. Thus, when one perceives a form, hears a sound, smells an odour, has a taste with one's tongue, receives an impression with the touch of one's body, or an idea takes shape in one's mind, one neither adheres to the whole nor to its parts.

A person should keep a close watch on his senses and restrain them, striving to ward off that through which evil might arise. When he attains control over his senses in this manner, he experiences a feeling of inward joy into which nothing evil can enter. In addition to the effort to prevent the growth of evil, the disciple must make an effort to overcome such evil, unwholesome things as have already arisen. He must also make an effort to create and develop wholesome things which have not yet arisen, and finally maintain wholesome things which have already arisen. He must not let them disappear but rather bring them to maturity, and to the full perfection of development.

7. Rightmindfulness is contemplation of the four funda-

mentals of mindfulness. They are : the way to the attainment of purity ; overcoming sorrow ; ending pain and grief ; and entering the right path and realising *nirvana*. Vigilance leads us to see correctly and to attain a point of view from which we can see beyond the pairs of opposites. He who does not practise attention is the plaything of the multiple influences with which he comes into contact. He is like a drifting cork which is at the mercy of the waves, and he submits helplessly to the interplay of his physical and psychical environment.

We must be conscious of our movements and actions, both physical and mental. Nothing that goes on within us should escape our attention. We must be conscious of our feelings, investigate them and search for their causes. We must be aware of anger when we are angry, seek its cause and foresee its results. In this way we can check all such feelings as envy, sensuality and anxiety. When we perform a charitable deed, we must also question ourselves as to our motives. This is a means of learning to know oneself, to get to know the world in which one lives, and consequently to acquire right mindfulness.

8. Right concentration is devoting oneself completely to a single object associated with wholesome consciousness. The four fundamentals of mindfulness which constitute the seventh step of the path are the aims of concentration, and the four great efforts of the sixth step are the prerequisites for concentration. Cultivating mindfulness results from the development of concentration. The Buddha calls right concentration *samyuk samadhi*. This is the source of self-

realisation, because it is the last stage of the Eightfold Path through which we can free ourselves from the bondage of suffering. *Nirvana*, the state of supreme happiness according to the Buddha, is to be achieved by crossing the seven steps of this path.

The Stages of Development

There are three stages of development for a Buddhist : morality, concentration and wisdom. This is summed up beautifully in the following precepts :

To refrain from all evil.

To do what is good.

To purify the mind.

The eight steps in the Eightfold Path are classified under the three stages. Morality includes right speech, right action and right living. Concentration includes right effort, right-mindfulness and right concentration. Wisdom includes the first two steps, right understanding and right thought. Although wisdom is in one sense the beginning of the Eightfold Path, it is its outcome in a more important sense. *Nirvana* is the result of the cessation of craving. It may also be defined as the extinction of lust, hatred and ignorance. The literal meaning of *nirvana* is "blowing out." It is freedom from bondage.

Karma Yoga and Society

Let us enumerate the qualities of a yogi who is called the perfect man (*sthithaprajna*) :

He is always cheerful, free from joy and sorrow.

He is fully contented.

He has realised the existence of one *atman* in all created things.

He does his duty without attachment.

He is untouched by all actions although he performs actions.

He is courageous and enthusiastic.

He has full faith in God.

It is difficult for everybody to achieve these qualities, but we should strive to approximate to them to whatever extent possible. "Make your mind equable and steady, similar to *sthithaprajna* and perform all actions which have befallen you according to your status in life." The principle of maintaining an equable frame of mind need not necessarily mean acceptance and practice of nonviolence. It is performing actions which one is duty bound to perform, and at times it may also mean fighting evil, even violently. It is with this point in view that Shri Samartha Ramadas exhorts us to counter boldness with boldness, impertinence with impertinence and villainy with villainy. It is on this principle that Guru Hargobind, a saint, took up the sword to meet evil, as Arjuna was advised to do by Krishna.

In all these instances it is not the action that must be considered but the motive behind the action. If the motive is sinful, the corresponding action will be sinful, but if the consequences of action are bad, its motive is not necessarily bad. Our philosophers have therefore emphasised that in dealing with ethical problems one must consider principally the intentions of the doer rather than the results of his actions. The

Gita tells us that attaining perfection is a very long process, and a start has to be made by performing actions without selfish motives.

We must keep in mind that we are talking of the present age, and not the age of Krishna and Buddha when people lived austere lives and worshipped God. But today in India people seem to have stooped low morally and spiritually, and we are mostly governed by selfish interests. There is scarcely any affection and consideration for one's fellow beings, not to speak of devotion to God. Our society needs a major spiritual operation. First aid will not help. We have to look into our traditional principles handed down over the centuries and see how much of them can be modified and adapted to meet the requirements of present-day society.

But is it not necessary that one should first help oneself before helping others? Let us see what Krishna says about this in the Gita: "I look after the maintenance and welfare of those persons who are permanently steeped in Yoga." (IX, 22)

What he means here is that when we look after the welfare of others God looks after our welfare. Our own welfare should not be the motive of action if we wish to spiritualise action itself, that is to make it Karma Yoga instead of merely Karma. Closely linked with this are two statements in the Mahabharata which emphasise the need to look upon others as part of oneself:

That man who looks upon others in the same way as he looks upon himself and who has given up violence and has conquered anger obtains happiness in the next world.

One should not behave towards others in a way which one considers adverse or painful to oneself.

This is the essence of all religions and morality.

Dharma also means a pattern of conduct whereby one places oneself in the position of others. Do not cause pain to others, because what is painful to you is painful to others. So control yourself and behave righteously towards all as if they are yourself. In all living beings the same *atman* is present. The Buddha says : "As I am, so are they. As they are, so am I." This is the basic principle of self-identification. The Christian commandment "Thou shall love thy neighbour as thyself" is on the same lines. Jesus advises : "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."

The principle of self-identification is comprehensive, easy to understand and universally acceptable once we frame the following general rule : "Realise the identity of the *atman* in all created beings and behave towards others with an equable frame of mind as if they are yourself." From this general rule we could formulate the following individual commandments :

- * Be kind to others.
- * Help others as much as possible.
- * Take care of their welfare and put them on the path of advancement and love them.
- * Do not get tired of them.
- * Do not hurt their feelings.
- * Behave towards others with justice and equality.
- * Do not deceive anyone.

- * Do not deprive anyone of his wealth or life.
- * Do the greatest good to the greatest number.
- * Treat all children as your own children.
- * Love your father, mother and wife as you love yourself.
- * Your son is the same as yourself.
- * Your wife is half your body and self.

This idea of self-identification is to be fitted into the four stages of life. Family life is the first lesson, but instead of always being restricted to the family circle one should expand it to include members of the village or the community, realising that the same *atman* is present in all created beings. This self-identification should lead to an attitude of forgiveness. The Mahabharata says : "Do not become an evildoer in dealing with an evildoer, but behave towards him as a saint because enmity is never done away with enmity or by evil-doing." Christ has said : "Love your enemies, and whosoever shall smite you on your right cheek turn to him the other one." This shows the highest principle of forgiveness.

Is it always possible to win over evil through such non-violent means and forgiving those who do you wrong ? There may be circumstances when we may have to use the principle of "using a thorn to remove a thorn," where we may have to fight and punish evildoers. But the first step should always be conciliatory. Subsequent action should however be taken without any sense of attachment and our duty to God. This has been emphasised a great deal in the Gita. Krishna has interlinked absence of hostility with action that is not motivated by desire from the point of view of devotion. Karma yogis, who have reached the perfect state, are not inimical to

any living creature. They recognise the identity of *atman* with all, and they never fail to do the duty which has fallen to them according to their own status in life after discriminating between what is worthy and what is not worthy.

The duties of a true Karma Yogi are :

(1) To keep his mind free from attachment to objects of pleasure, to remain peaceful, friendly and equable by realising the identity of *atman* with all beings. The Karma Yogi should do his duty in this world without desire and to the best of his ability with a pure mind. He should be willing to sacrifice his life for the sake of duty and *dharma*.

(2) To preach to people whatever is proper for them according to the prevailing *dharma*.

(3) To enable people to progress gradually and peacefully as far as possible along the path of betterment.

Now let us summarise the essentials of Karma Yoga :

1. This is meant for householders.
2. Discrimination between *atman* and body is essential.
3. The mind must be trained slowly to shun desire of objects, to be steady, calm and balanced.
4. One should work always energetically as absence of desire does not mean inaction.
5. Unhappiness is due to the bondage craving creates and is not a quality of action itself.
6. We should do our duty and work as worship and sacrifice to God and accept their fruits as God wills.
7. As long as one lives one cannot cease to be involved in action.
8. One should stick to one's own work instead of

changing from time to time if one finds one's work too demanding. Duty has preference over religious rituals.

9. Self-identification is the cornerstone of Karma Yoga.
10. Beyond the household, the next plane of action is for the community and the nation.
11. One should perform charity as a rule.
12. Real renunciation concerns desire for the fruits of one's work and not the fruits received by God's will.
13. One should have full faith in God's will.
14. One should conquer anger by non-anger and falsehood by truth.
15. One should feel the presence of God in oneself and in all others.

Meditation and Devotion

We have discussed the science of Karma Yoga in the preceding chapter. Now let us discuss the place of knowledge and love (*bhakti*) in this science. There may be people who feel that knowledge of God and devotion to Him are not necessary for the practice of Karma Yoga. This attitude is not correct, and we should on the other hand emphasise that Karma Yoga, or right action, cannot be practised without devotion to and knowledge of God. It would otherwise be difficult to work disinterestedly, to perform one's duties as an act of worship or sacrifice.

The various methods of achieving happiness are interlinked to a lesser or greater degree, and in the end knowledge, love and action merge. It depends on the nature of a person which method he initially chooses. The Gita instructs us in Chapters VI, VII, VIII and XII about the methods and uses of meditation and the technique of devotion to God which one should adopt independently at the initial stages as well as to supplement Karma Yoga.

Narada defines *bhakti* as "intense love of God." When man achieves this spiritual state he loves all and hates none. The practice of *bhakti* as a method of Yoga leads to a profound

religious experience which negates all desire for sensual and earthly things and fills the seeker's heart with love of God. It leads to a feeling of intense humility where one feels oneself to be nothing, empty, since one is filled with God.

As a rule, the particular qualities associated with *bhakti* are love, devotion, mercy and tenderness. Prahlada says that the supreme end for man is absolute devotion to God and the feeling that He is present everywhere, and this state is to be achieved by giving up everything and claiming nothing. According to the Gita it is total self-surrender to God. It is trust in God, to love Him, to be devoted to Him, and to become a part and parcel of Him. Such devotion has in it the content of the highest knowledge, as well as the drive to make one perfect.

Speaking about Bhakti Yoga, a modern commentator, Acharya Vinoba Bhave, emphasises the following three elements :

- (a) Singlemindedness.
- (b) Setting bounds to one's life to achieve this.
- (c) A state of equanimity or evenness of vision.

The Gita says : "The yogi should try constantly to concentrate his mind on the supreme self, remaining in solitude and alone, self-controlled, free from desire and longing for no possession." (VI, 10)

We must divert our attention from all sensual desires, withdraw our attention from all external objects, and concentrate it on the object of meditation. The mind must always think of the Lord.

The following qualities are essential to achieve this condition :

- (a) *Satatam*—constant practice without break.
- (b) *Rahasi*—solitude.
- (c) *Ekaki*—aloneness.
- (d) *Yatachittatma*—self-control, absence of excitement, strain and worry.
- (e) *Nirasi*—freedom from desire, no harping on daily needs, no insistence on anything.
- (f) *Aparigraha*—freedom from longing.

Other important requirements are pure food and internal purity. Purity is the bedrock on which the practice of *bhakti* is built. It means internal cleansing of the body.

Here the following qualities are required : *satya*—truthfulness, *arjava*—sincerity, *daya*—doing good to others, and *ahimsa*—not injuring others by thought, word or deed. Simple living is also very necessary. The needs of the human body are very few, but our modern way of living has complicated them and made them enormously difficult to satisfy. Our life and conduct should therefore be simple, straightforward and austere.

One needs much physical and mental strength to meet the demands of this Yoga. A great amount of training and will power is required to exercise control over the mind. We live in the midst of fear and suspicion, and unless we get rid of them and develop a balanced outlook and singlemindedness of purpose we shall not be able to exercise the necessary mind control. The mind is ever restless, full of powerful

desires, and it is as difficult to control it as the wind which blows freely.

Krishna instructs that through "constant practice and detachment" one must conquer one's mind so that all the senses are controlled and they move along the right path. (VI, 35)

Again, the Gita says ; "Serene and fearless, firm in the vow of celibacy, subdued in mind, let him sit, harmonised in God, turned to God and intent on God. He who sees God everywhere and sees all in God, God is not lost to him or he lost to God." (VI, 14, 20)

The Lord assures us that he who follows the path of righteousness will never be out of step. He will never come to grief. Krishna has given Bhakti Yoga the highest place. It is superior to Tapas, Jnana Yoga and Karma Yoga as it contains the best of these three, and in addition love and devotion. Lord Krishna emphasises the greatness of Bhakti Yoga thus : "Of these, the wise man, ever steadfast and devoted to the One, excels ; for supremely dear am I to the wise and he is dear to Me." (VII, 17)

In Chapter VIII (5—7) Krishna tells us that the soul goes to that object on which a person's thoughts have been hovering at the time of death. Those who think of God at that time go to Him. That one may sin all one's life and just remember God at the time of his death may seem very simple, but this is not so. Only those persons can think of God as their end draws near who have been devoted to Him all through their lives and will not think of their possessions, wives, children and other worldly matters. Only those who

always remember God in their lives will remember Him at the time of death.

Meditation is a lifelong practice and it depends upon one's strength of character and concentration. In Chapter XII, the Lord again stresses devotion to God with absolute faith. Krishna says that if one cannot be absorbed in God instantly, then one must concentrate. If that is not possible, one should work for God. If neither is possible, He tells us that the simplest way is to surrender oneself to God (*prapatti*).

When we see ourselves with equable minds, nonattachment develops. Love for all beings arises from this, and finally the urge to serve one's neighbours, the community and the nation.

Tulsidas says :

Grant me, O Master, by Thy grace,
To follow all the good and pure,
To be content with simple things,
To use my fellows not as means but ends,
To serve them stalwartly, in thought, and deed,
Never to utter word of hatred or of shame,
To cast away all selfishness and pride,
To speak no ill of others,
To have a mind at peace
Set free from care and not led astray from Thee,
Neither by happiness nor woe.
Set Thou my feet upon this path
And keep me steadfast in it,
Thus only shall I please Thee, serve Thee right."

Let us try to follow these precepts.

Control of the Mind

Conquer the mind and thereby conquer the world.

—Gurbani

Meditation is directly related to control of the mind. The Gita is clear on this point, stressing that "the yogi should try constantly to concentrate his thoughts on the supreme self." Self-control should free him from desire and longing for possessions. Further, it says that the end-result, supreme bliss, "comes to that man whose mind is calm and passions pacified and who becomes one with Brahman and sees himself in all beings and all beings in himself." (VI, 27-29)

The Gita adds that it is possible to reach this state of mental equilibrium, but it is difficult. "It needs practice and nonattachment." (VI, 35)

Now let us examine in the rest of this chapter the crux of the problem, the relationship between mind and desire, the method of meditation and the pitfalls to be avoided.

The Problem

We live in a world we call modern. We can view developments in various parts of the world by sitting in our living

rooms and watching television. We have gadgets to make living more easy. We are even devising means for interplanetary travel. Advances in medical research and knowledge of the nature of life enable us to live longer. The growth of scientific knowledge enables us to satisfy most of our material needs. But with all this are we happier than our ancestors, who had to do without these things? I say positively no. Human beings invented machines to serve them, but now these inventions threaten to dominate mankind. Look at the armaments race. The so-called advanced countries spend billions of dollars yearly on war weapons only with the idea of exterminating one another. People everywhere seem to have surrendered to sensual values which are merely materialistic in nature. God is replaced by money. Meditation is replaced by flattery or slander of others. The holy scriptures are replaced by advertisements. Without spiritual light our senses are directed only to the pursuit of pleasure. These pleasures spring from desire, greed and illusion. If we are to achieve a better quality of life, we must avoid these pitfalls.

Let us first answer the questions : "What is life?" and "What am I?" There is a basic reality, a fundamental truth, to which we must return if we are to break the endless cycle of rebirths and free ourselves from suffering. What is the purpose of life? One thing is clear : life does not belong to us, we belong to life. God is the fountainhead of life. He is the ultimate reality or truth. He speaks truth through us. Every visible being is a conditioned phenomenon. A flower, a fruit, a seed, a stem, how can we separate one from the other? We cannot understand them without carefully noting:

their interrelationship. Life breathes through each of them.

Tozan, a famous master of Zen, said : "The blue mountain is the father of the white cloud. The white cloud is the son of the blue mountain. All day long they depend on each other, without being dependent on each other. The white cloud is always the white cloud. The blue mountain is always the blue mountain." This is an accurate interpretation of life. We must always follow our true nature. We can only find this in ourselves. We make a mistake if we try to interpret our natures in terms of our surroundings. Spiritual light accompanies peace of mind.

How is it possible to join our eyesight with God's ? We certainly do not see things with our eyes alone. There is also someone behind us who sees through our eyes. I believe He is a force called God. When our minds and senses are clear enough they will receive the illumination of truth. We should clear our minds so that eternal light might pass through.

Discussing the concept "I am" on the basis of the Sutras, I. K. Taemi says it "represents the pure awareness of self-existence and is therefore the expression of pure consciousness of the Purusha. When pure consciousness gets involved in the matter and owing to the power of Maya, knowledge of its real nature is lost and pure 'I am' changes into 'I am this.' Here 'this' may be the subtlest vehicle through which it is working or the grossest vehicle, namely the physical body. The two processes—the loss of awareness of its real nature and identification with the vehicle—are simultaneous."

Let us now see what the scriptures tell us in this connection. The greatest enemies of mankind are desire, anger and

greed, Lord Krishna observed in the Gita. He advises us to abandon them, for any one of these is sufficient to bind man to the cycle of birth and death. These enemies overpower the mind and do not allow it to emerge from wickedness. These are the gates of Hell. The Gita further says :

Bound by a hundred ties of hopes, given over to lust and anger, they strive to secure by unjust means hoards of wealth for several pleasures. This today has been gained by me, this desire I shall fulfil, this is mine and this shall also be mine in future....

Brooding on the objects of the senses, man develops attachment to them. From attachment comes desire, from desire anger sprouts, from anger proceeds delusion, from delusion confused memory, from confused memory the ruin of reason, and because of the ruin of reason he perishes.

Under noble truths, Lord Buddha tells us that "craving and desire is the cause of all suffering. Suffering can only end by destroying desire."

Gurbani tells us : "The world burneth in the fire of desire and thus one's whole life is wasted by error and sin. Maya and attachment are borne out of black darkness of ignorance and the whole world is in egoism and I-amness." (Muru Slok 3)

When desire is obstructed, it transforms itself into wrath. As fire cannot be satisfied with fuel, desire cannot be appeased

by sensual pleasures. Sin increases in direct proportion to desire.¹

Time and again man is humiliated because he falls victim to lust and greed. But he is still unable to escape from them and give his thought to God. As a patch of cloud hides the blazing sun, Maya in the form of desire hides Iswara. When the cloud disappears the sun becomes visible, when desire disappears Iswara reveals himself. God shows his energy and light through man. So the act of worship must be aimed at removing defilement from the mind.

The Relationship of Mind and Desire

The senses and the mind are said to be the seat of desire. The senses are sent out on lustful missions. The mind is naturally stuffed with defilement such as covetous concepts, for the mind surrenders itself to the senses as if it were a puppet controlled by strings. Mental bondage and untold misery are created by attachment to worldly desires. The only way to be free from desire is to seek out one's higher self (spiritual consciousness), the real lord of all the senses, mind and intellect. In that moment even desires will become strong wheels to carry out the mission of life.

¹ The eight temporal needs (desires) are :

1. Craving for pleasures.
2. Strong desires to be free from the unpleasant.
3. Craving to hear ego-pleasing words.
4. Not wanting to hear ugly, displeasing words or sounds.
5. Greed in acquiring material things.
6. Feeling unhappy when the desire for possessions is not gratified.
7. Being pleased by personal praise and admiration.
8. Being unhappy at personal slander or criticism.

Thus control of mind is the key factor. When the mind surrenders to the divine cause, the senses will be faithful guides to truth, goodness and beauty. We cannot protect the peace of the world with arms however powerful the weapons we create. Peace must be generated within us through devotion to God. Sri Ramakrishna points out the way thus :

So long as these passions are directed towards the world and its objects, they behave like enemies. But when the same passions are directed towards God, they become the best friends of man, for they lead him to God. Lust for things must be changed into hankering after God. One should not be angry with God for not revealing himself. These passion cannot be eradicated but must be educated. They cannot be destroyed but harnessed and purified. In other words, desire can be an enemy or a friend according to the direction the mind gives it.

Mind cannot be an object. If I try to answer the question what mind is, it is already not mind. It cannot be defined. But it is possible to say that the mind is like a mirror. A mirror does not have its own aspect, but when an object is reflected in it it forms the same aspect as the object. The Sufi poet Omar Khayyam said : "I am a mirror, and who looks at me sees whatever good or bad he speaks of himself." Master Suzuki said : "The perfect man employs his mind as a mirror. It grasps nothing, it refuses nothing, it receives but does not keep." Mind can best be described as a bundle of thoughts ; so when we stop thinking it is impossible to grasp the concept of mind. Control of thought is needed.

Lord Buddha said : "Remember, the only way to become victorious over wrong thoughts is to review from time to time the phases of one's mind, to reflect on them, root out all that is evil and to cultivate all that is good." Our capacity to retain memories of the past are unlimited, though thoughts of the future will also enter our consciousness.

Is mind something ? The answer is no.

Is mind nothing ? The answer is no as well.

Is mind good ? No. Evil ? No.

This means we can grasp it with our consciousness because it transcends subject and object. The principal cause of mental suffering is within the mind. We act according to the mind's command and thus accumulate Karma, either good or bad. The mind reveals itself directly through our behaviour. It appears conditionally, dependent on our six senses and objects and is called consciousness. It moves and affects one life and many lives to come. It comes out of our attachment, in which our life surrenders to desires and never comes to an end, because we yield Karma continuously. From our own experience we know in a number of ways that mind is distinct from the organs and the body. We can think, feel, imagine, remember, rejoice, regret without using any of our ten organs, which proves that there is a different instrument making all these functions possible.

According to Hindu philosophy, the mind has three constituents called *gunas*—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* : three levels—conscious, sub-conscious and super-conscious, which all belong to the same mind in the same man : four functions—*manas*, *buddhi*, *ahamkara* and *chitta* ; and five conditions—scattering, darkening, gathering, one-pointed and concentrated.

The idea of controlling the mind is to keep it as far as possible in a *sattva*, sub-conscious and one-pointed state. When such a mind is applied to any activity, it shines and produce excellent results. Most students of meditation stop at this, but some would like to go beyond *sattva* and concentrate. In this condition the super-conscious is attained. In fact, the mind is omnipresent. Each mind is connected with every other mind.

The secret of happiness is peace of mind. If there is no peace of mind, no amount of talent, wealth and power can make one happy. The mind has no beginning and passes from one body to another after death. Sperm and ovum are not the principal creative factors of an infant's mind. The mind exists before the relationship of parenthood, and the principal cause of suffering and happiness is therefore created in the continuity of passing lives, and that too through the mind. Who stops this Karma and suffering ? The mind in you and me. Saint Kabir says :

The mind can only converse with the mind, there is no meeting better than the meeting of minds. The mind is Shakti and the mind is Saiva. Yea, the mind is the essence of all the five elements. He who taketh this mind to higher regions, to him is revealed the mystery of three worlds.

Guru Nanak says : "O my mind, thou art the spark of the Supreme Light : know thy essence. O my mind, thou art absorbed in ego, and the weight of ego oppresses thee. O my mind, be not proud that thou knowest even a thing, for he who turns Godward is humble. If within thee are ignorance and ego, then through the true word thou art cleansed."

Our minds are like a mirror covered with dust. There is every possibility of removing the dust. From this process will emerge the universal mind which Hinduism and Sikhism hold as the absolute reality. It is on this doctrine that their basic teachings are based.

The most important feature of the working of Karma is mind. All our words and deeds are coloured by the mind or the consciousness we experience at particular moments. When the mind is unguarded bodily actions are unguarded, speech and thought are also unguarded. When the mind is guarded every action is controlled.

“By mind the world is led, by mind is drawn, and all men own the sovereignty of mind.” Like attracts like, good begets good, evil begets evil. This is the law of Kamma or Karma.

Meditation

Experience shows that man can conquer his mind and direct it according to his will. Mind is the cause of all bondage, and also of its own liberation. Most of the bondage is due to the nature of the mind, which is restless and shifts constantly from object to object. An earnest and persistent method of changing man's nature, which is the sum total of his habits and character, is called meditation. In our daily life the mind leaps from one object or thought to another. Meditation generally involves an effort to stop this merry-go-round of mental activity, the main cause of bondage, and focus attention on one object till the mind becomes still, calm and serene. Meditation is an awareness of a single unchanging source of stimulation (object) for a definite period of time. It may be described as a

process of turning the mind away from overwhelming competing activities. This is called one-pointedness of mind. Basic attachments are slowly eliminated and greed and ego are removed from the mirror (mind) by meditation. This opens the mind to higher spiritual potentialities and freedom from suffering. The foundations of meditation are "for the purification of beings."

Suffering—Ignorance	desires aversions	Harmful Karma— Suffering
Suffering—Meditation	Anapanasati Nam Simran	Useful Karma

Useful Karma—Removal of Defilment—Freedom from Suffering—Nirvana—Mukti.

God is ultimate reality or truth. The main plank of meditation is that "as one thinks so one becomes." Think of God always and one can acquire some of His qualities. Meditation helps control the mind and thus realise reality.

Huxley observes: "Japam has effect upon the sub-conscious mind, inducing the selfless one-pointedness of will and thought and feeling without which the unique knowledge of God is impossible. Japam will end by presenting God to the soul in the form of an integral intuition. By this the soul passes into reality."

Guru Arjun says about meditation :

The name is the urge of Smritis, the Vedas and Puranas.
The name informs all wisdom, intuition.

Meditating on the Lord, thou mergest in poise.

Meditating on the Lord, thou become all-knowing.

Meditating on the Lord, cleanse the scum of thy mind.

Yes, imbued with the Name, one is rid of ego.

Yes, imbued with the Name, one abideth in truth.

Imbued with the Name, one knoweth the way of true Yoga.

Thus meditation has been recognised by the Gita and Gurbani as the way to find and reach truth, that is God.

The cornerstone of meditation is mindfulness of some objective (seed) when meditating. It is simple awareness involving suppression of fantasy, minimal conceptual activity and the elimination of anticipation or reminiscences.

To me nothing exists except NOW.

NOW=experience=awareness=reality.

The past is no more and the future not yet. Nyaponika says :

Rightmindfulness recovers for man the lost pearl of his freedom, snatching it from the jaws of the dragon Time. Rightmindfulness cuts men loose from the fetters of the past, which he foolishly tries even to reinforce by looking back frequently with eyes of longing, resentment or regret. It also stops man from chaining himself even now to the imaginations of his fears and hopes and to anticipated hopes of the future. This rightmindfulness restores to a man a freedom that is to be found in the present.

If your mind is related to something outside itself that is a small mind, and a mind which includes everything is a big mind. There is no dualistic understanding in a big mind. Thus in spiritual terms meditation helps the small mind to realise the big mind, small I to search for big I and lower self to search for higher self. All are in this temple of the body.

Two main types of objects for mindfulness have been suggested in various scriptures. The Hindu and Sikh scriptures base concentration on the repetition of Om or Wahe-guru, called Nam Simran, and Buddhism bases mindfulness on a system of breathing called Anapanasati. Most of the steps for meditation are however common. In the first the object of concentration is sound, and breathing in the second.

Nam Simran

The Vedas claim that sound is the seed from which the universe has come into being. Sound is God (Nada Brahman). He persists eternally as the syllable Om, a blending of A+U+M. By the Creator uttering Om once, the universe is projected, maintained and withheld. The Sadhaka who gets fixed in the repetition of Om evolves in Godhood.

Patanjali says that repetition of the word helps control of the mind. God is indicated by the mystic syllable Om. Repetition of the word and the contemplation of its import (God) are means of achieving concentration. Thereby inwardness of thought and freedom from obstacles to concentration are gained.

The Gita says : "I am the father of the world, the mother, the dispenser and the grandfather, I am the knowable, the purifier, the syllable Om, and also the Rik, the Sama and Yajus." (IX, 17)

Guru Granth also throws light on this subject :

Onkar is He who created Brahma, yes, Brahma who treasured God in His mind.

Onkar is He who created the mountains, the Yugas.

Onkar is He who created the Vedas.

Onkar is He who through the word emancipated all.

Onkar is He through whom God-conscious beings are saved.

Here is the meaning of the word Om, which indeed is the essence of three words.

The Gita also illustrates the method: "The meditator should try constantly to concentrate his mind on the Supreme Self, remaining in solitude and self-controlled, free from desires and longing for no possessions." (VI, 10) Further, "Doubtless the mind is restless and hard to control, but by practice (*abhyasa*) and nonattachment (*vairagya*) it can be controlled."

Although at the start of Kalijug the rishi Vyas gives the importance of Nam Sankirtan instead of elaborate sacrifices, alms giving and similar ceremonies, Guru Nanak says: "Nam is the only panacea for all sufferings of mankind and the easiest way to control the mind for ending of the cycles of birth and death." Like the Hindus, the Sikhs believe that "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God." The Sikhs utter the word Waheguru (the Lord of Wonders) as the object of mindfulness. They believe it is our destiny to become like Him. And as one thinks as one becomes therefore Waheguru is to be dwelt upon every moment through the Name. Nanak further says: "I hear and utter and lean upon the Lord's Name, and so I am rid of all involvement with fruitless deeds. Sacrifice am I a hundred times to him who hears, knows and believes in the Name."

He said: "Name is the qualitative expression of God's personality. The Name is a symbol that treasures within

itself all that God is and is not. Nay, it is that all-pervading spirit, the bright essence which informs all life and all creation."

"The Name informs all creatures, all beings. The Name informs all worlds, all universes."

"The Word is the Guru, the Guru is the Word. For all the nectars are enshrined in the Word."

In abolishing succession, the tenth Guru said : "The Word is the embodiment of the Gurus. He who searcheth me findeth me in the word." Thus he declared Gurbani the Guru of the Sikhs.

Words like Om and Waheguru are uttered as the object of mindfulness with attention and awareness and to the exclusion of all other thoughts. Their utterance should be harmonised with breathing. For example Wahe or O is drawn from the navel and Guru and Om drawn from the heart so that their powerful effects may be felt in all the limbs and organs of the body. The mind should be aware all the time and the feeling in the heart of wanting nothing, doing nothing but God. I am reminded here of the Muslim prayer "La Ilaha Illallah" (There is no God but God).

Merely repeating the Word cannot control the mind unless its essence is realised. "Everyone utters the name of the Lord, but by mere utterance one realises Him not. Yet when through the Guru's grace the Lord is entrenched in the mind one gathers the fruit." (Gauri—M3)

Nam Yoga is a complete way of life. Nam Simran is very important because it is the core of devotion. It is the practice of living in the presence of God by keeping Him ever

in mind with love and devotion, by meditating on and singing of His excellence.

Guru Nanak explains :

For the Guru teaches the disciple repetition of God's name.

This practice annihilates his ego. Then he practises meditation on the divine attributes and intones God's names.

This intonation with Love brings about assimilation with the superself.

The Name and the ego are opposed to each other and they cannot abide in the same body.

Thus with meditation on Name ego goes away.

The mind is lured by the poison of ego. Yea, on its head is an immense snakehead of ego. But one to whom the mantra of the word is administered is purged by God of the poison of ego.

Why should there be repetition ? This is based on the theory of *samskaras* that the sum total of impressions lives in the mind. Molecular vibrations never cease. They are the greatest stimulus that can be given to the spiritual *samskaras*. The repetition of Waheguru or Om and thinking of Him is just like keeping good company always in your mind. Thus light will come to you, the self will become manifest.

Practice

To begin meditation the preliminary conditions must be taken into consideration, that is to say control of body, mind and breathing. Unless their control is effected we cannot achieve satisfactory meditation.

First, posture is very important. Sit in a full lotus position, left foot on right thigh and right foot on left thigh. Like this both legs become one. If this posture is difficult, one may start sitting in an ordinary way. Keep the spine straight, and ears and shoulders should be in a line. Push your shoulders upward with the back of your head and pull your chin in. Press your diaphragm down. This will maintain your physical and mental balance. Your hands should form the cosmic *mudra*. With you left hand on top of your right, touch your thumbs together lightly at the height of the navel. Hold your arms freely. Sit straight as if you are supporting the sky. In sitting the most important point is to own your physical body. If you slump you will lose yourself. Your mind will wander, You should understand that you are right here and right now. This is the key point.

Second, attuning your breathing is very important. Meditation is the only method to tame the mind and harmonise it so that instead of pursuing desires it remains calm. To keep your mind from wandering concentrate on a certain object. Breathing is a general method. When you inhale your abdomen rises, and when you exhale it falls. Breath in and out slowly and deeply. In a few moments the palpitation of your heart will be appeased and your breathing will be smooth and regular, for it is the main gate of concentration. After reaching this stage choose Om or Waheguru as the name symbol for concentration.

Third, to train your mind or gain control over it is not only the most important factor but also the final stage to attain. It is very simple. I say so because all you have to do

is empty your mind of all extraneous thoughts so that the real nature of *atman* might fill it. Empty your mind and keep it calm and pure, and God will shine through you. Don't think. Don't make a subject and object. This is not so easy because we are accustomed to thinking. The mind is fickle, light and quick, resembling a monkey. To subjugate a monkey its trainer requires a strong stake fixed in the ground to which the monkey is tied with a rope ; and to train the mind there must likewise be a stake.

The most commonly known meditation subject the Buddha himself practised and commended is Anapanasati, mindfulness of breathing. This is convenient and peaceful. We can practise it anywhere and at any time. In this meditation subject breathing in and breathing out is the stake which tethers the mind. Mindfulness is like a rope to tie the mind to the stake of breathing. Unless one is negligent, the rope of mindfulness will remain unbroken and the mind cannot get loose to leap into the jungle of sense objects. This process of controlling the mind is technically called Samadhi.

The Stage of Meditation

Let me give a brief account of breathing as a meditation subject. The very first step in directing mindfulness towards the meditation subject, namely breathing, is like the coupling of two separate objects. This is technically called thought conception or applied thought. It actually means just a state of mindfulness directed towards an object (breathing) without any reason. Sustained thought also does not mean logical thinking. It is simply the association of mind and breathing.

It has the characteristic of continued pressure on the object and does not go astray. If *virakka* and *vichara* are compared to taming a monkey, the first is like the act of tying the monkey to the post and the second is like the state of the monkey being tied to it. This first state of *virakka-vichara*, applied thought and sustained thought, is called preliminary work.

When this stage is maintained for some time it results, according to the natural mental law, in a marvellous satisfaction technically called rapture. In this state of rapture one feels physically light, for the body is not stiff and gradually becomes calm and cool until one feels it does not exist. Breathing also slows down to the extent that one feels it is not taking place. The nerves are freed from strain. Rapture is accompanied with a feeling of joy called *sukha* (happiness). After this one has only to maintain equanimity, for the mind ceases wandering and the rope of mindfulness is freed from pulls.

In fact, this state of equanimity is in a state of development from the very beginning. But now it is concentrated on this single object of breathing, and when this is done meditation attains the first stage of perfection. This state of mental concentration is called one-pointedness. When these five factors of meditation, namely applied thought, sustained thought, rapture, happiness and one-pointedness, are in complete harmony, training the mind is partly completed. This stage is enough for householders and students.

Whatever method of meditation you adopt, just continue your ordinary practice and your character will build up. If your mind is always busy, there is no time for character build-

ing and you will not be successful. Building character is like erecting a dam. You must use different mixtures of materials for the foundation and take it up step by step, brick by brick, fixing them with a special mixture of cement and lime. You must know exactly what you need, but if you get excited you may use the wrong mixture or the wrong bricks and the dam may leak. So do not overload yourself. Be careful at every step, otherwise the building will remain weak. Moderation is the best principle for meditation. Do not try to achieve anything special except to be mindful of the object. That is your goal. You have everything in your own pure quality. If you understand this there is no fear. Our practice can never be perfect, but we should continue without being discouraged. This is the secret of meditation.

Walpola Rahula gives these simple instances of what the Buddha taught regarding the psychology of meditation. You breathe in and out all day and night, but you are never mindful of it, you never for a second concentrate your mind on it. Now you are going to do just this. Breathe in and out as usual, without any effort or strain. Now bring your mind to concentrate on breathing in and breathing out, let your mind be aware of and observe your breathing. When you breathe you sometimes take deep breaths, sometimes not. This does not matter at all. Breathe normally and naturally. The only thing is that when you take deep breaths you should be aware you are doing so. In other words, your mind should so fully concentrate on your breathing that you are aware of its movements and changes. Forget all other things, your surroundings, your environment. Do not raise your eyes and look at

anything. Try to do this five or ten minutes a day.

At the beginning you will find it extremely difficult to get your mind to concentrate on your breathing. You will be astonished how your mind wanders. You begin to think of various things. You hear sounds outside. Your mind is disturbed and distracted. You may be dismayed and disappointed. But if you practise this exercise twice a day, morning and evening, regularly you will gradually begin to concentrate on your breathing. After a certain time you will experience just that split second when your mind is fully concentrated on your breathing, when you will not hear even sounds nearby, when no external world exists for you. This slight moment is such a tremendous experience for you, fully of joy, happiness and tranquillity, that you would like it to continue. But still you cannot make it do so. Yet if you go on practising regularly, you may repeat the experience for periods of longer duration. That is the moment when you lose yourself completely in your mindfulness of breathing. So long as you are conscious of yourself you cannot concentrate on anything else.

Essentials to Meditation

To achieve control of the mind the attitude we adopt towards normal life is important. It is not a question of half an hour or one hour of daily meditation. It has to become the way of our life. In practice our object for mindfulness is breathing or Name as explained earlier, but in daily life we should be mindful of all our actions. We cannot separate meditation from life.

(A) Personal hygiene, moderation in eating, moderate but regular sleep are the first prerequisites for anybody who wants to practise meditation. Then comes regularity in time for work. There should be a fixed time for meditation. Early morning and before bed at night are considered the best times.

(B) Bowing and praying are essential features of meditation. Bowing means giving up or surrendering oneself. To give up oneself means to abandon egocentric and dualistic ideas. In fact, in bowing to oneself a small mind is bowing before a big mind. When one is just oneself one bows in the true sense and is in harmony with everything. Sometimes disciples bow to their master, and at others the master bows to his disciples. Guru Gobind bowed to his first five disciples. This shows the value of bowing (Ape Guru, Ape Chela). There is no difference between master and disciples. In the act of bowing the lower self meets the higher self and they come together.

Bowing and praying help to eliminate self-centred ideas and take vows to get rid of evil desire and surrender ourselves completely to the higher power. This is the teaching of the Gita and Gurbani. "Fix your mind on Me, sacrifice to Me, surrender to Me. So small you come to Me" (Gita). Nanak says: "Surrender thou to the true Guru and assert not thy ego. O my mind, gather gladness, losing thyself, and abide in humility." Nanak says further: "Nanak has abandoned all efforts, all arguments and sought the refuge of the Lord, and so he surrenders himself to the feet of his God." We daily bow to Guru Granth. This is not bowing to the book but to the Gurbani (Word). The idea is to surrender your

mind, not to perform the ritual of offering money, but keeping the mind with you. It should mean complete surrender. It is called the express way in meditation.

Similarly, prayer is self-discovery. We should never pray for something we desire as God knows what is good for us and what He wants to give us, as well as what is bad for us and thus not to give. It is self-reliance as well as confession of the soul. It means : prostration which counteracts pride ; offering which counteracts greed ; rejoicing in the virtue of others which counteracts jealousy and anger ; and confession which removes defilement and ego and purifies the mind. Prayer should be for contentment, "the capacity to remain satisfied whatever may happen." To obey God's will is the first lesson to remove the gap between man and God according to Nanak in Jap. It also helps a person to remain detached from worldly ills. It does not mean inactivity but to remain calm in activity. Detachment, serenity, purity are aspects of that ideal condition of the meditator. Praying and bowing help a lot in achieving these conditions.

(C) To give—Dana. Giving is nonattachment. Small, I cannot give anything because of attachment to everything. Only when big can I feel good in giving. The goal of our life is to reach another shore. To reach the other shore step by step is the way of true living. The Buddha gives six ways :

- (1) Dana Prajna Parmita—Dana means give, Prajna means wisdom and Parmita means to cross over.
- (2) Sila Prajna Parmita—Buddhist precepts.
- (3) Ksha ti Prajna Parmita—Endurance.
- (4) Virya Prajna Parmita—Constant effort.

(5) Dhyara Prajna Parmita—Meditation.

(6) Prajna Parmita—Wisdom.

Guru Nanak give eight steps to cross the shore :

(1) Chastity and self-control of body, mind and desires.

(2) Steady perseverance in efforts.

(3) Pure reason.

(4) Essential truth of all religions.

(5) Fearlessness.

(6) Renunciation, nonattachment.

(7) Love of God.

(8) The Divine Name.

Every religion gives the highest importance to Dana. Zakat is essential in Islam, sharing of one's income is one of the essential teachings of Sikhism. This is the way to achieve nonattachment. It is not the value of what is given but the spirit behind giving that is important. It may be food, construction of a bridge, medical aid or one line of teaching. Dogen said : "To produce something to participate in human activity is also Dana. But to forget what we have been doing, and for what, is true nonattachment. We have to be aware that what we do or what we create or what we give is really the gift of the big I. Then we shall not be attached to it and we shall not create problems for ourselves and others.

(D) Checking : another practical way is to check the awareness and mindfulness of whatever we do physically or say in our daily life, whether private, public or professional. We should always be aware of whatever we are doing at a given moment. Usually, while we are busy with something, our minds are thousands of miles away, immersed in our

problems and worries, in memories of the past or speculation regarding desires in the future. Thus we never enjoy what we do in the present, and the results of whatever is done without concentration are not good. The result is low output although same physical energy is the input. Self-observation is called checking. One should attempt to observe oneself as though somebody else is checking one's actions. This check should be a part of almost any activity one performs. This is the lesson of Karma Yoga in the Gita. Zen also points out that worldly activity can be a perfect vehicle for development so long as one is free from attachment. This is the lesson of Sikhism. "Be in the world, but not of the world."

(E) Moderation is the golden mean in living. Excess of anything is always evil. Too much food, drink, speaking, work and even sports always breaks the harmony of life and creates trouble. Excessive medicine also becomes a poison. So we should avoid extremes. Only moderation leads to a life of harmony. It maintains mental and physical health. friendship, cooperation, human relations, family ties and social peace. Moderation is like tuning the strings of a guitar. If the strings are too taut or too loose we shall not be able to produce good music. Without moderation in everything we cannot succeed in leading a life of meditation. This is the ethical requirement of meditation.

(F) Faith in self is the basic foundation. Control of the mind is essential for this. One must subdue one's weakness and raise oneself by one's own efforts, the Gita says. Deliberate, patient, intelligent, systematic hard work is needed.

(G) Keeping the company of good people. The scars of

old wounds may be in you, and evil company is just the thing to activate them. Therefore always avoid such company.

"The Guru's word is the life of all lives, for through it one experiences God. Without the word darkness filleth the world. It is through the word that God becomes manifest."

Swami Vivekananda said : "The purer the mind the easier to control it. Purity of mind must be insisted upon if you would control it. Perfect morality is the all in all of complete control over mind. The man who is perfectly moral has nothing more to do. He is free."

Purity, contentment and nonattachment are the three pillars of meditation. Unless these are present, there is no possibility of success in meditation.

Avoid these pitfalls :

Strong likes and dislikes—attachments and aversions.

Immoral acts.

Causing harm to others.

Intoxication.

Indulgence in vain controversy about the affairs of others.

Slandering or flattering others.

Overambition to get quick results in meditation.

Feelings of guilt.

The company of evildoers.

The best religion in the world ensures meditation on the Word and noble actions.

The Field and the Knower and the Three Gunas

Krishna compares the human body to a field because man sows seeds of action in it and reaps the fruit. But we must distinguish the external from the internal in man's existence. The external is the result of Karma. The internal is the knower (the conscious principle), the self which acts as a witness of what goes on in the field (body). All change such as growth, decline and death takes place in the body. The conscious principle is however detached, lying behind all active states as witness (witness consciousness). Man is a twofold contradictory being, free and enslaved, godlike and devil-like, and we should endeavour to recover and reaffirm our free side and godlike side.

Proper training is necessary to develop the ability to distinguish between body and self. Our system of education is defective in this. Modern education results in engraving on our minds that "I am only this body" instead of "I am altogether different from the body" or "I am a separate entity, bright and holy." The present education system is body-matter-oriented, but what we need is a system which would remove this domination of the physical over the spiritual,

of body over self. Pleasures and pain are all alien to us and therefore do not belong to us. "You are not the body, you are the self" (*neti, neti*). When one realises this, his problems are solved. All the prophets and leaders who have sacrificed their lives for the cause of mankind were able to discriminate between the field (body) and the knower.

Another important lesson is given to us in the following verse: "He who sees the supreme Lord abiding equally in all beings, never perishing in the perishable, he who sees Him sees." (XIII, 27)

Prakriti is primary matter, and it is responsible for all the multiple forms we experience in our *samsaric* everyday world. *Prakriti* is made up of three *gunas*—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. "The three modes of Goodness (*sattva*), Passion (*rajas*) and Dulness (*tamas*) are born of nature and bind, O mighty Arjuna, the imperishable dwelt in the body." (XIV, 5)

What leads to the apparent involvement of immortal "witness self" in the cycle of birth and death (*samsara*) is the power of the *gunas*. They are present in all the products of *prakriti*, though in different degrees, sometimes one predominating over the other, and in some others all overlapping. It is very useful to us to know their qualities, especially in practising self-control :

Sattva—perfect, pure and shining.

Rajas—impure, full of passion, craving and attachment, much of I and mine.

Tamas—ignorance, negligence, inaction.

Sattva gives rise to knowledge, *rajas* to greed and *tamas* to dulness. But we must rise above these three qualities, and

in this regard being dominated by the *sattvic* quality is conducive to going beyond *sattva* itself.

As Krishna says : "When embodied soul rises above three modes, it is freed from birth, death, old age and pain and attains life eternal." (XIV, 20) Krishna then goes on to describe the qualities of a person who has gone beyond these qualities: "Unconcerned, unperturbed, does not waver, regards pain and pleasure alike, no difference between gold and clay, firm in mind, behaves alike in blame and praise to friend and foe." (XIV, 24-25)

A devotee is one who has come beyond these qualities : "He who serves Me (God) with unfailing devotion of love rises above the three modes. He too is fit for becoming Brahman." (XIV, 26)

But let us look at our present society. The prevailing conditions in it are not at all encouraging. People are by and large *tamasic*. Their chief characteristic seems to be laziness. The result is that they often neglect their duties. What do we see in our daily lives and in our work ? People are not only lazy but also seem to preach laziness. Laziness is the worst enemy of the individual as well of our society. We complain that there is no work for millions, but when work is available, do we perform it with dedication ?

It would appear that all strikes and work to rule are signs of *tamas*. We want to earn without working to deserve these earnings. We are only active enough to sleep and eat even as often as four or five times a day. The only way to shake off laziness is to make the body work. Too much sleep brings negligence, error and forgetfulness. One needs

to be vigilant. Most of our young people know that their parents have earned enough to maintain them in a state of affluence. So why work? They sleep up to noon, although the value of sleep is not in its duration but in its soundness, which only comes with hard work.

Rajas too is a terrible foe, and most of the time man alternates between *rajas* and *tamas*. The difference is that a *rajasic* man is overactive, overambitious and wants to achieve everything in no time. For him the sky is the limit. A *tamasic* person is involved in too many actions motivated by personal ambition. He is restless and uncertain. He desires rewards from every type of his activity, with the result that he lacks concentration and perseverance. The Karma Yoga of the Gita is the medicine of a *rajasic* man. He is active. Only his energies need to be properly channelled and directed with single-mindedness. There is no use in running about aimlessly. One should dedicate oneself fully to one's duty and consider it as worship. Here my advice is that side by side we should study daily the teachings contained in our religious books and try to give them practical shape. Otherwise, it may be difficult to fight *rajas* without *nama*.

Our aim is to overpower *tamas* and *rajas* and to develop as much *sattva* as possible. All our actions should be good. The more we become steadfast in *sattva* and try to give up egoism and attachment to the fruits of work the quicker we reach our aim. The world is like a tree with its roots in heaven and branches in the world which are nourished by the three *gunas*. This tree is to be chopped down by the axe of desirelessness and detachment. By eliminating *rajas* and

tamas and nourishing *sattva* we should develop ourselves and become pure. Finally, we must conquer the very attachment to *sattva* itself and become free. "Know God as the supreme reality and adore Him with your whole heart and mind." This is the greatest lesson of the Gita.

Now what are the divine and demonic tendencies ? And how are they manifested in human beings ? We may summarise this as follows :

✓ *Divine* : He is fearless, pure in heart, believes in the scriptures and acts accordingly. He is charitable and controls his passions. He is straightforward, truthful and even-tempered. He harms nobody. He renounces the fruits of his actions. He has a tranquil mind, and a tongue that speaks no malice. He is compassionate towards all. He is not greedy but modest, and abstains from useless activity. He has faith in his strength, He can forgive and endure. He is clean in thought and action. He is free from hatred and pride, and he leads to freedom.

✓ *Demonic* : He is a hypocrite, arrogant, conceited, prone to anger, cruel and ignorant, and his behaviour leads to bondage. He cannot discriminate between good and bad. He has no love for truth and purity, his conduct is evil, and he has no faith in the scriptures. He is an enemy of mankind. His lust is unappeasable. He is controlled by pride and runs blindly after evil. His only purpose in life is gratification of the senses. He is busy piling up dishonest gains. He considers everybody inferior. He is addicted to sensual pleasures and is haughty, short-tempered, intoxicated with wealth, full of egoism, vanity, lust, wrathful and power-hungry.

Krishna says that such demonic people are the enemies of God and mankind and are subjected to the continuing cycle of birth and death. We should abandon demonic and develop divine tendencies. The essence of the demonic type is quest for power, ambition and wealth, with a heightened sense of ego. We seem to be racing nowadays among ourselves to acquire these qualities. One finds me-tooism everywhere. Everybody is for himself, although the Gita and other religious books repeatedly remind us that me-tooism is the prime enemy of our spiritual life. The only way to curtail this evil is to control the senses.

✓ The battle of Kurukshetra is fought both inside us and outside in the world all the time. Within us both divine and demonic tendencies are present. Good is on one side and evil on the other. Good qualities have commanders like fearlessness, humility and truth. There must be a constant attack on evil from all sides. The commanders of evil are ego, supported by lust, rage and greed. Fearlessness should attack from the front. Humility should guard the rear. Truth should guard the flanks. Never allow your commanders of fearlessness, humility and truth to rest. Keep on attacking till the enemy is overpowered and made ineffective.

Krishna has given us so many methods of achieving success in this struggle, but unless these methods become an integral part of our daily life results cannot be achieved. It is only when we proceed in a disciplined way to acquire knowledge, practising Karma Yoga, meditating on God and being devoted to Him, and making these activities part of our life, that success can be achieved. The faith of every

individual is in accordance with his nature. A man is made of the faith that is in him, and his faith lies in the concentration of his power of mind on a given ideal. "We are on account of our past and we can create our future." As Goethe says : "Earnestness alone makes eternity."

✓ Let us start our day early. After cleaning our body, let us begin our duty with reading the sacred scriptures. We should always remember the austerities of body, mind and speech and surrender all desire for the fruits of our work to God. We should endeavour to see Him everywhere and perform our given duties energetically. Before going to bed, think about the good and bad actions you have performed in the day and remember Him and sleep. This should be your daily routine. This is what the Gita wants us to practise ceaselessly.

A Harmonious Whole

The Gita harmonises wonderfully the philosophy of action, devotion and knowledge. All three are blended beautifully. The Gita gives preference to action against non-action. Again and again, it emphasises action and renunciation of any desire for its fruits. "Go on constantly performing action, but keep renouncing the fruit of it." This touchstone of renunciation of fruit is of universal application. Actions bound by *rajas* and *tamas* are to be abandoned altogether as these are always associated with a great passion for the fruits of action. A man has to perform his duty for duty's sake and renounce all attachment and desire for rewards. This renunciation benefits one's spiritual development, but to abandon one's duty is sinful.

Relinquishment is of three types, namely : of the fruit of action ; of the idea that self is the agent and the consequent attachment ; and of all agency along with the realisation that the Lord is the author of all actions.

The Lord further clarifies that acts like sacrifices, donations and doing penance should be performed even by those who prefer to give up all action. These actions purify

the soul. But they should again be without desire for the fruits of action.

Vinoba Bhavé summarises the teachings of the Gita beautifully in this manner : first, whatever we do, we should do it renouncing the fruit ; secondly, that *rajasic* and *tamasic* actions should not be undertaken ; thirdly, we should not even give room to the egoism which says : "How much I have renounced." It is impossible for any embodied being to abstain from work. But he who gives up the fruit of action is a relinquisher. (XVIII, 2)

The advice of the Gita is clear on the question of duty : (1) Worship your duty, achieve perfection in it, put your heart and mind into it. Do it with *sraddha*. (2) There is more happiness in doing your own duty even without much skill than running around trying to do another's duty. (3) One should not give up the duty suited to his nature by birth and environment.

"He whose understanding is unattached everywhere, who has subdued his self and from whom desire has fled, comes through renunciation to the supreme state." (XVIII, 49)

The Gita repeats that restraint and freedom from desire are essential to spiritual perfection. *Naishkarmya* therefore does not mean complete withdrawal from all work but inner renunciation. We must conquer our lower nature of ego and attachment, and one way of doing this is with a sense of devotion to God. "Fix thy mind on Me, be devoted to Me, sacrifice to Me. Prostrate thyself before Me so shalt thou come to Me. You are dear to Me. Fear no more, I will save you from sin and bondage." (XVIII, 65-66)

"Surrendering in thought all actions to God and resorting to steadfastness in understanding, do thou fix thy thought constantly on Me."

"Thou shalt cross by My grace all difficulties, but if from self-conceit thou will not listen to Me thou shalt perish."
(XVIII, 57-58)

The perfect man accordingly is one who is endowed with pure understanding, who restrains himself from involvement with all objects of the senses, seeks solitude, eats less, curbs his speech, body and mind, and meditates constantly. Full of compassion, he casts aside vanity and violence, pride, lust, anger, possessions, and is free from ego and tranquil in heart. Such a man is worthy of becoming one with Brahman.

The Lord also gives the highest preference to a person who teaches the Gita to his devotees. This is considered the highest service, and he who performs it will be dearest to Him. Even a person who listens to the Gita with faith will be freed from evil.

Arjuna's mind was thoroughly cleansed by these words of divine wisdom, and in the end he says: "My bewilderment has vanished, I have regained understanding by Thy grace. I stand free from doubt. I shall act according to Thy advice."
(XVIII, 73)

The lesson of the Gita which convinced Arjuna of the need to combat evil is equally applicable to the present age. The whole of mankind is entangled in duality and doubt. So we should read, meditate, listen to what the Lord has taught us and relieve ourselves from our day-to-day miseries, which are mostly self-created.

In conclusion, let me recall what Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan said about the Gita :

The teaching of the Gita is a Yoga. When the human soul becomes enlightened and united with the divine, fortune, victory, welfare and morality are assured. We are called upon to unite vision and energy and not allow the former to degenerate into madness or the latter into savagery. The double purpose of human life is personal perfection and social efficiency. Human perfection is a sort of marriage between high thought and just action. This should be the aim of man and the philosophy of our governments, where priesthood and kingship can work together.

Epilogue

The Gita is a mandate for well-planned and dedicated, but at the same time disinterested, work, which is the need of the day. Let me summarise briefly for the reader the various important elements of its teachings.

It is most important to know that spirit is deathless and indivisible, that the body is transient, and that *svadharma* cannot be thrust aside. The soul goes from one body to another after death according to one's Karma. The greatest enemies of mankind are desire, anger and greed. (XVI, 21) They create bondage and suffering, and Krishna advises us to kill them. The Buddha emphasises the same lesson by pointing out that desire is the cause of all suffering. Suffering can only be ended by destroying desire.

Gurbani also tells us the same in *Maru Slok* : "The world burneth in the fire of desire and is then wasted away by error and sin. Maya and attachment are born out of the black darkness of ignorance and the whole expanse of the world is involved in ego and I-ness."

Thus all *avatars* (incarnations) emphasise that the cause of all human suffering is craving, and the only way to end it is to kill this enemy. Let us summarise the different methods preached for this purpose.

Krishna teaches :

1. To action alone hast thou a right, and never to its fruits. Let not the fruits of action be thy motive, and let thou also be not attached to inaction. (II, 47)

2. Evenness of mind is called Yoga. Abandon attachment and keep an even mind in success and failure. (II, 48)

3. Set good standards for others to follow. Do your duty. (III, 21)

4. Who sees God everywhere and sees all in God, God is not lost to him, nor is he lost to God. (IV, 30)

5. On Me fix thy mind, be devoted to Me, worship Me, and bow before Me, and thou shall attain Me. I promise this to you because you are My beloved friend. (XVIII, 65)

6. He who abandons all desires and acts, becoming free from longing and without any sense of mineness or egotism, attains peace. (II, 71)

7. Abandoning attachment to all *dharma*, all come to Me for shelter. Be not grieved for I shall release thee from all sins. (XVIII, 66)

8. Teach, study and listen to the supreme secrets given by me. (XVIII, 68,70,71)

Lord Buddha teaches us eight noble disciplines capable of destroying desire :

(1) Right view, (2) Right intention, (3) Right speech, (4) Right action, (5) Right livelihood, (6) Right effort, (7) Right-mindedness and (8) Right concentration.

Guru Nanak also lays down principles to attain freedom (*mukti*) in the last hymn of Japji :

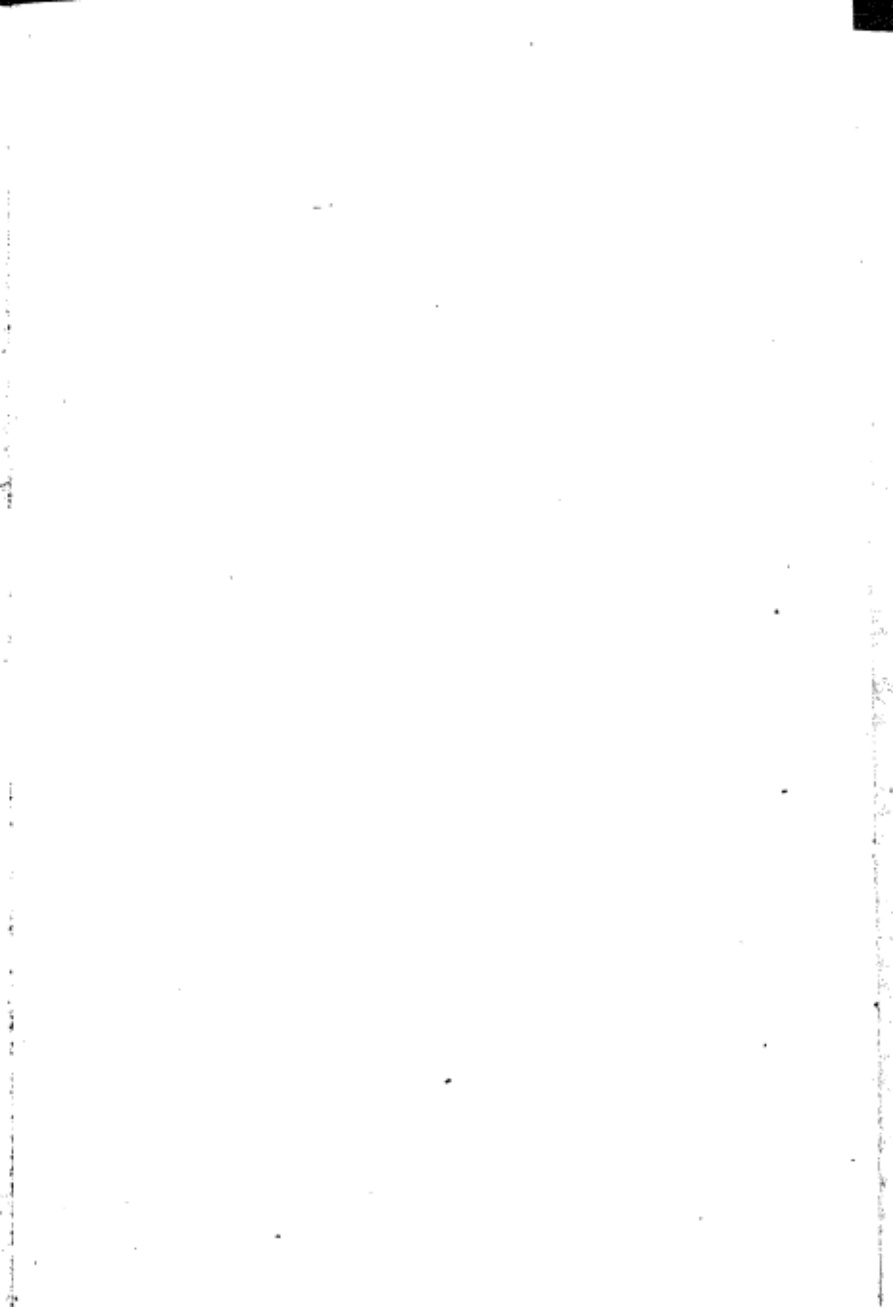
1. Chastity and self-control of body, mind and desire.

2. Steady perseverance in effort.
3. Pure reason.
4. Essential truth of all religions.
5. Fearlessness.
6. Renunciation of desire or concern for the fruits of action.
7. The immortalising love of God.
8. The divine name.

Guru Nanak further says in the last *slok* of Japji that merits and demerits shall be read out in the presence of the judge.

Man is not therefore to withdraw from day-to-day tensions but face them boldly, renouncing the evils of greed, treating work as worship, and always meditating on God while living in worldly surroundings. So, brothers, instead of quarrelling about religion, caste, language or property, let us try to be good Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims and Christians first.

The fight should be between good and evil. All good people, irrespective of religions affiliations, should unite to establish a new society preaching *dharma* based on the Karma Yoga of Lord Krishna and the Nam Yoga of Guru Nanak. This was indeed practised by Guru Gobind Singh, who fought to establish the true *dharma*, the kingdom of righteousness, and sacrificed everything, his father, his children, for these ideals, showing us thus the way to *nishkamakarma*, which needs to be understood and followed by us all.



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